

PREACHING AS A MEANS OF PASTORAL CARE

A THESIS-PROJECT

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF

GORDON-CONWELL THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY

KHAY M. SEE

MAY 2017

Copyright © 2017 by Khay M. See. All Rights Reserved.

To my loving wife Nancy and my two living children Deron and Shana without whom this work would not have been possible. Thank you.

To the memory of my daughter Thea, who is in the Father's hand, the inspiration for this thesis-project. Daddy is looking forward to seeing you again.

CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	vii
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION	1
Introductory Statement	1
How It All Began	2
What This Project Is Not	6
Project Overview	8
Research Methodology	9
The Primary Problem in Preaching Today	10
Definition of “Preaching” and “Pastoral Care”	12
A Further Reflection	15
Conclusion	17
2. BIBLICAL THEOLOGY	18
God as the Shepherd	23
The Good Shepherd in Ezekiel 34 and 37	32
Jesus as the Shepherd	36
Peter, the Shepherd	43
Conclusion	46

3. LITERATURE REVIEW	47
Introduction	47
The Importance of the Spoken Word	47
Why Do We Preach?	49
An Exhibit or An Exaltation	53
Caring as Encouragement	57
Caring Leads to Repentance	61
Relationship with Our Congregation	65
Building a Caring Community	66
Conclusion	69
4. ANALYSIS OF SURVEY RESULTS	70
The Structure of the Surveys	71
The Result of the Written Survey	73
Semi-Structured Interview Findings	98
Evaluation of the Survey Results	101
Conclusion	103
5. CONCLUSION	104
Paul, the Shepherd	105
Why Preaching as a Means of Pastoral Care is Important	110
Practical Suggestions for Preaching as a Means of Pastoral Care	111
Summary and Conclusion	120

Appendix

A.	Semi-Structured Interview Questions and Responses	122
----	---	-----

BIBLIOGRAPHY	129
--------------	-----

VITA	134
------	-----

ABSTRACT

This project is a study on the correlation between preaching and pastoral care. Preaching is an integral part of church ministry. However, pastoral care in the context of preaching has not been seen as an integral aspect of preaching. I believe that incorporating pastoral care in preaching is important. It was so among the Old Testament prophets and in Jesus' teachings, in Peter's letters and in Paul's epistles. A survey was undertaken, primarily to pastors and lay leaders, to assess the correlation between preaching and pastoral care. Thereafter, practical suggestions were proposed to encourage pastors to preach sermons that can bring change and growth in people's lives.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Introductory Statement

This thesis-project will explore the possibility of preaching as a means of pastoral care.

When a minister enters into pastoral ministry, one of the responsibilities that will occupy the largest share of his or her time will be preparing sermons to preach. Preaching, by definition, means to publically proclaim a message to an assembled group of people. For ministers, preaching can be a form of spiritual guidance, to convey a vision, to teach certain biblical truths or to lead the church in a certain direction. If the minister is gifted in communicating and articulating his message, it can be a very fulfilling experience. If the minister is not comfortable with such a role, he or she may seek help from another either to be trained by a more gifted minister or to enrol in a preaching course. Regardless of the level of giftedness, a minister is entrusted with the sacred responsibility of bringing forth God's word to his or her sheep.

Everyone who has preached a sermon has endured moments of embarrassment and discouragement when the whole sermon delivery did not go as planned. We see faces of confusion and bewilderment when certain words do not come out as well as we had thought. On the more positive side, we delight in how God redeems our blemishes when someone is truly ministered by the words we speak. Whatever the outcome, we are called to preach the Word of God with boldness and valour.

When a person comes to a church service, the fact is that the person desires to hear the Word being proclaimed and wishes for some truth of the biblical word to become a reality in his or her life. The Sunday sermon is an important opportunity and place for the church, through its preachers, to hear the Bible come alive. Although there are many other occasions to hear the Bible come alive, such as in small group studies, personal devotions and Bible teaching classes, preaching shapes the way we encounter God. Preaching is vital in the life of the church. The Sunday worship service is where the vast majority of people have the most direct contact with their pastor. By listening to sermons, many people establish the connection between their faith and the world they live in. From the sermons, not only can they conclude how much their pastor loves and cares for them in helping them to see the reality of God in their lives, ideally they may also be engaged and be able to identify with the sermons. It is indeed a necessary, but very important responsibility resting on the shoulders of preachers.

How It All Began

The inspiration for this thesis-project came from an unfortunate event in my life. I have been in active full-time ministry for close to twenty years now and another four to five years as a lay leader. During that time, I have heard many sermons preached and I have also preached many sermons myself. Over the years, I sensed that there was something missing in many sermons that I have heard and even in my own sermons. It is not that the sermons were preached in a blasphemous way that made me feel they were inadequate. Rather, there was something missing in the sermons. People did not seem to be engaged and felt that most sermons were too intellectual, too academic or too

scholarly. In short, people were unable to identify with the sermons preached. “What would help someone to identify with the sermon?” I often asked myself. The revelation came when my first daughter, Thea, was born. But Thea only lived with us for eighty days. She died of a genetic disorder. My wife, Nancy, felt that the baby was not growing at a normal rate in the womb. Doctors later confirmed that Thea, while in the womb, was suspected to have Trisomy 18.¹ We were asked by many doctors to abort Thea because she would not survive the pregnancy let alone survive the delivery. We turned down the suggestion believing that God had given us this baby and He wanted us to see this baby to full term. The next few months were an emotional roller coaster ride for our family. Without a doubt, it was catastrophic for my family and extended family. I was saddened, disheartened, dispirited, demoralized and discouraged. No one seemed to know how to care for a pastor. I was indeed yearning to receive pastoral care. As a pastor, I often gave pastoral care to others. But when it came to my own dilemma, I received no care. During the course of Nancy’s pregnancy with Thea, up until birth, and Thea’s short eighty-day life, I thought a lot about pastoral care. In fact, there were certain points in our difficult time where we encountered undeserved comments, ill-remarks and poorly given advice from family members, friends, church members, doctors and nurses. I often asked what would make pastoral care effective in a case like this or how does one give pastoral care?

¹ Trisomy 18 is a rare fatal genetic disorder that occurs in about 1 out of 6000 births. The Trisomy 18 foundation, accessed January 5, 2015, http://www.trisomy18.org/site/PageServer?pagename=whatisT18_whatis.

The light bulb moment came when we were at the hospital. My wife Nancy was admitted a few days before Thea's due date for an External Cephalic Version² procedure. After the procedure was successfully performed, Thea had to be induced for labour. A resident doctor from the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (N.I.C.U) who was doing her first year residency at the hospital came to our room to enquire about our plan for when Thea is born. We had already spent one night at the hospital waiting anxiously for the birth. We were tired, worried and needless to say in a state of fright. Nancy kept a journal of what happened that night. She wrote,

The resident doctor basically asked us what we wanted to do with the baby when she was delivered. She already assumed that the baby had been diagnosed with Trisomy 18 and repeated the grim statistics to us that 95% do not survive the first year. I got the impression that she was leading us in the direction of doing no intervention. She offered no comforting words. She asked us what we wanted to do without presenting the options. After she left I had the case of the blues.

The communication was so raucous that we were taken aback by it. With fear and terror, in our moment of panic we said, "Yes, we want the baby to have full intervention." The resident doctor was perturbed by our decision and stormed out of the room probably wondering why we elected such an imprudent choice. Later that afternoon, a neonatologist, the head of the N.I.C.U came into the room. The neonatologist greeted us with a smile. He then pulled a chair over next to my wife's bed, held my wife's hand, looked her straight into the eyes compassionately and explained in a very soft, but firm voice what our options were. We agreed that for the short term, they would resuscitate Thea, if needed, and would treat her appropriately, but in the long term once her test

² External Cephalic Version is a procedure to turn a fetus from a breech position into a head-down position manually. Healthwise Staff. 2015, "External Cephalic Version (Version) for Breech Position." Last modified May 2015, accessed January 5, 2015, <http://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthtopics/content.asp?hwid=hw180146>.

results were in and confirmed for Trisomy 18, we would not try to prolong her life. The neonatologist knew of our predicament and he was able to assure us that this was the right thing to do and we should not place too much concern over it. Because of his assurance and gentleness, it gave us confidence that we made a well informed decision.

From there, I learned a lot about pastoral care. What to say, what not to say, how to encourage and how to be present. I also learned a lot about preaching by watching the way the neonatologist spoke to my wife. The tone of his voice, his body language, the constant eye contact, knowing how to make people at ease in a difficult moment, knowing what to say and how to say it really captured me. He knew how to empathize and how to convey a very important message in the most difficult situations.

As I reflected on these experiences in my life, I thought I could transfer what I saw at the hospital to my ministry. I constantly asked myself, “Do people that I preach to view me as the resident doctor or the neonatologist?” I think I know whom I want to emulate. However, how are we able to accomplish that? Is having a solid work of exegesis and hermeneutics on biblical texts sufficient? Is the telling of the stories of Jesus and other biblical stories enough to convince someone to believe? Why is it that telling a life story in a sermon is more compelling than preaching a biblical text? Why is it when it comes to hearing personal testimonies, everyone has his or her ears grounded to hear intently, but when it comes to our Lord’s testimony, we begin to lose interest?

But as a pastor, how do I bring this to the pulpit? I have been contemplating this idea for a number of years now and I would like to put my experience and my thoughts into a more formal academic paper. Therefore, the aim of this project is to discover if and how preaching can be used as a means of pastoral care.

I believe preaching should be transformational on the part of the hearers. I share the same conviction with Darrell W. Johnson that “something always happens”³ when the word of God is proclaimed. It could lead to repentance. It could lead to discerning where God is leading a person. It could be an answer to prayer. It could be a word that someone is waiting to hear. It could be transformational. Our Lord is a personal God that dwells in each and every one of us who believes in Him. If our God is a personal God, ought the spoken word on a Sunday morning be personal? I believe pastoral care gives us the personal aspect of the preached word. Therefore, the main question that I will be constantly asking throughout this project is “Can preaching be used as a means of pastoral care?”

What This Project Is Not

Someone may ask what about biblical theology, exegesis and hermeneutics? Are they not the vital work of sermon preparation? Are they not adequate in preparing a well crafted sermon? Yes, they are! Can a sermon be preached without the work of biblical theology, exegesis, and hermeneutics? Absolutely not! Without them, it would only be relegated to a mere pep talk on Sunday mornings. As a student of the Bible and a pastor who has been given the responsibility to preach, I am keenly aware that a good sermon

³ Darrell W. Johnson, *The Glory of Preaching* (IVP Academic, 2009), 7.

must not neglect the hard work of exegesis and hermeneutics. But I also believe there has to be more. A sermon cannot only be crafted within the four walls of our study. It has to be stretched outward within the four walls of our studies to our communities within the church and at large. It has to be more than just biblical theology, exegesis and hermeneutics. Perhaps that element of “more” is pastoral care.

This project will not attempt to evaluate all different types of sermons and neither will it aim to come up with a model sermon. This thesis will generalize from personal experience, survey results, and the writings of experts in the field of preaching and pastoral care to create awareness for preaching as a means of pastoral care.

This project is primarily focused on pastors and lay leaders who preach regularly and have a passion for preaching. It is not directly focused on congregational members, even though they are the primary listeners and recipients of care. However, it is a call to pastors and lay preachers to exercise pastoral care in preaching. Perhaps a future study can be done focusing on the hearers’ perspective and whether pastoral care, either directly or indirectly, is being communicated in sermons.

As I reflect on my own preaching ministry, I often ask myself, “How is this text going to help my church?” I want to be able to speak to the lives of the people hearing what I have prepared for them, not just trying to fulfill my responsibility on Sunday mornings to preach. I take the example of the apostle Paul in his letters to the churches in the New Testament. Whenever Paul addressed a specified church in his letter, he addressed them very specifically regarding their sins, struggles and falsehood. He did not speak in generalizations. He knew what was going on in those churches. Knowing your

congregation firsthand will help you know how to preach to them effectively. It will help preachers to pick the right texts and the right emphasis in explicating those texts. From my own experience, I have found that when I hear people share their sins, fears, worries, and wounds, it helps me to prepare my sermons and to find the right kind of words and tones to better communicate to my congregation. As a pastor preaches with pastoral care, it will not just come from his or her own mind and mouth, but from his or her heart and soul.

Project Overview

This thesis-project is divided into five chapters. Chapter One provides the background of the thesis-project, including a biblical definition of preaching and pastoral care from the experts and describes the overall purpose of this project. Chapter Two looks at the biblical aspect of preaching and pastoral care. It examines the idea that shepherding is the paramount component in amalgamating preaching and pastoral care. It includes an extensive observation of the aspect of shepherding in the Old Testament. This chapter also looks at the examples of Peter's letters, which are shepherding in nature, as well as the role of Jesus as the Good Shepherd in the Gospels. This is followed by Chapter Three, which will draw from the expertise of prominent authors in the field of preaching and pastoral care. It explores Christian scholars' thoughts on the subject of preaching and pastoral care and how they are connected. Chapter Four deals with the research methodology for this project and outlines my observations based on the responses from the surveys conducted. This thesis-project concludes in Chapter Five with a study of the Apostle Paul's role as shepherd through his epistles and ends with my

hopes and desires for the outcomes of this project, practical suggestions for implementation, and direction for future investigations.

Research Methodology

In order to examine my hypothesis, I plan to collect data in the form of questionnaires. The questionnaires will be divided into two different parts. The first part will be in the form of an online survey with twenty-five questions that are intended to garner the participants' perception of the relationship between preaching and pastoral care.

This first questionnaire will be distributed to a group of pastors and lay leaders with a minimum of thirty respondents, but not exceeding thirty-five respondents. I will make contact with potential respondents via telephone and email to invite them to participate in this survey research. Once a respondent agrees to participate in this research, an email will be sent to each respondent with a letter explaining the purpose of this research. The email will also contain a link to access the online survey. I live in Vancouver, BC and lead and attend a pastors' fellowship that meets once a month. I am planning to make contact with the group of pastors there.

The second questionnaire will include eight open-ended questions. It will be done in a semi-structured interview format with pastors and lay-preachers with a minimum participation of six, but not exceeding eight participants. The participants in this semi-structured interview will be selected based on their longevity in ministry, knowledge, preaching frequency and personal connection. It is through my own personal and work

relationships with these highly experienced pastors and lay-preachers that will ensure participation and completion of the survey.

Once the online survey results are collected, the results will be presented in chart form. For each question in the online survey, the number of respondents who chose each response will be counted and a percentage of the total will be calculated. The responses for each question from the second questionnaire will be summarised. Thereafter, a personal, general observation will be made based on the responses to the survey questions.

The information collected from both questionnaires will be important in helping to develop a comprehensive understanding of the possibility of a connection between preaching and pastoral care.

The Primary Problem in Preaching Today

If I could sum up in one sentence the primary problems in preaching today it would be this: the lack of understanding of the people we shepherd. There is too little emphasis on connecting with the persons on the pew. We would incline to nourish the mind, but not satisfy the heart. We see the church more as a seminary setting and deliver our sermons in the form of theological lectures. Our intention is to inform as many nuggets of truth as we can in forty minutes on a Sunday morning. We care too much about feeding the mind, but not touching the heart. In a less flattering word, our sermons are too idealistic. It leads to people not being able to make the connection between the Gospel, the world we live in and our personal lives. There is too much emphasis on just

one way communication. I believe that preaching ought to be “two-way communication,” but not in the way we would invite our congregation to respond to our sermons.⁴ It is in the way that the preacher is conversing with his or her congregation. It is as if the preacher were sitting in the living room knowing what is going on in a person’s life and speaking the truth of God’s mighty word to this person. Therefore, the lingering question is whether the congregation that we are preaching to can understand and connect with our sermons.

In the mid-eighties, Wayne E. Oates in his article in *Preaching Magazine* made a very interesting observation. He said, “For most of Christian history, preaching and pastoral care would not be spoken of with a plural verb. Preaching and pastoral care were seen and practiced as a singular experience.”⁵ The disconnection between the two could be easily understood. It is because pastoral care is seen as an entity only to provide care for those who are going through hard times. Preaching is seen as only someone saying something on the pulpit, not necessarily meaning anything to the congregation. This observation came to light when an elderly congregant informed me that when she was in her early twenties, her pastor used to preach fire and brimstone messages. She was going through a bout of depression then and had a very difficult time believing in a loving God. Her pastor preached on the pulpit that the reason why people suffer depression is because “they do not pray enough.” I do not know how theologically astute that assertion was, but if I was going through depression and the reason why I am going through it is because

⁴ I see such an exercise as pertinent to knowing how much our sermons are being heard by our congregation. However, I understand the practicality of such an exercise may preclude the sanctity of the whole service.

⁵ Wayne E. Oates, “Preaching and Pastoral Care,” *Preaching Magazine* (November 1. 1985), accessed January 10, 2015, <http://www.preaching.com/resources/articles/11566843/>.

God is punishing me, it would make me more depressed or make me question what I have done wrong. I do not think that is the way a sermon ought to be preached. Preparing a sermon requires a thorough knowledge of people. We may have certain assumptions of the fallen nature of human beings, but that would not be the burden we would assume when we prepare a sermon. There must be some sort of weight or burden of our congregation's needs we must carry into our sermon preparation. There needs to be some specific knowledge of the congregation. A good, effective preacher will know his or her people. A lack of knowledge of the people we shepherd leads to a less effective sermon.

Definition of “Preaching” and “Pastoral Care”

The early fathers understood preaching as caring for the soul. John Chrysostom exclaimed “Preaching makes me well: as soon as I open my mouth to speak, my weariness is forgotten.”⁶ St. Ambrose of Milan’s sermons were often viewed as mystical and used the concept of soul to understand the Bible and its hearers.⁷ St. Augustine of Hippo, who was arguably the best Latin preacher in the late fourth and early fifth centuries, championed the cause of contextualisation in preaching. He often used Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*, Cicero and classical literature to make the connection with his congregation. He conversed with his own church members and that formed the way he

⁶ John Chrysostom, *Homilies of St. John Chrysostom on the Gospel of St. Matthew*, trans. Reverend Sir George Prevost (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956) 88:523.

⁷ Nebojsa Pantic, “St. Ambrose and the Spiritual Aspect of Pastoral Administratorship,” *Orthodox Christianity*, 31 (February 22, 2007), accessed January 11, 2015, <http://www.orthodoxchristianity.net/articles/31>.

crafted his sermons. Sometimes he had to chide them, to calm them down because they reacted with moans and groans, and sometimes they laughed.⁸

However, my observation is that this concept has slowly fizzled up with the emerging of mega-churches in North America. The reason is obvious. Preachers do not have the time or energy to get to know their congregation in a mega-church setting. As these mega-church pastors attained celebrity status, young preachers began to emulate their style of preaching. Unfortunately, this understanding (or misunderstanding) has slowly become the norm of preaching in churches today. Preaching has now become “thus says the Lord” without any context and relevance in the community. This has definitely deviated from the meaning of preaching in the New Testament.

Preaching is generally translated in the Greek New Testament as “kérussó”. It is typically defined as someone making an official, public announcement of something. It is closely associated with proclaiming something. The word “kérussó” is used sixty-one times in the New Testament.⁹ It is often used in conjunction with the more specific term, evangelize, which was transliterated to “euangelizomai” or the expression “announce the good news.” It is something the herald of a king might do to announce an edict or the king’s message to the people. The noun, herald (keryx), refers to one who proclaims news publicly.¹⁰ The word “kérussó” is the word used most often for both Jesus and the

⁸ Augnet. 2010. “Works of Augustine: His Impact, Preaching.” (2010), accessed January 25, 2015. <http://augnet.org/default.asp?ipageid=393&iparentid=384>.

⁹ Help Word-studies. 2011. “2784. Kérussó.” 2011. Accessed January 25, 2015, <http://biblehub.com/greek/2784.htm>.

¹⁰ Baker’s Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology, “Preach, Proclaim,” Walter A. Elwell, 1996, <http://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionaries/bakers-evangelical-dictionary/preach-proclaim.html> (accessed January 25, 2015).

apostles' preaching. The definition presupposes that the speaker has something to say, thus calling the hearers to listen attentively.

"Pastoral Care," on the other hand, has a more complex definition. We seem to understand the act of pastoral care better than to define it. There are so many facets to pastoral care and any definition to it seems to be appropriate. Howard Clinebell defines pastoral care broadly as,

Pastoral care and counseling are valuable instruments by which the church stays relevant to human need. ... An effective caring and counseling program, in which both minister and trained lay leaders serve as enablers of healing and growth, can transform the interpersonal climate of a congregation, making a church a place where wholeness is nurtured in persons throughout the life cycle. ... Pastoral care and counseling contribute to the continuing renewal of a church's vitality by providing instruments for the renewal of persons, relationships and groups.¹¹

Based on the definition provided above, pastoral care is a reflection of care, concern, compassion and love of God. It is an expression of our love for one another. I would like to add more to the definition. Pastoral care is living in the lives of the sheep that God has entrusted to us. Empathizing with the problems that one is facing helps us to build an in-depth relationship with the members of the church. It is difficult to give pastoral care to someone who is a stranger. We may be able to give pastoral care on a surface level, but we would not be able to empathize with someone whom we hardly know. Pastoral care exists at all levels of care and at all times. We tend to give pastoral care to those who are sick and facing crisis, but it is equally important to give pastoral care to those who are healthy. The level of care may differ, but it is still pastoral care nevertheless.

¹¹ Howard Clinebell, *Basic Types of Pastoral Care and Counseling*, (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1984), 14.

When preaching and pastoral care come together, it forms a very effective combination: the preaching of His word being proclaimed and the care of His love being projected. This is at the end of the day, a reflection of the loving and caring God in the lives of His most precious creations.

A sermon preached with pastoral care touches hearts, enables change, and provides the support for people to make changes.

A Further Reflection

To help us understand this concept of preaching as a means of pastoral care even better, I would like to make a brief reflection on the caring God and His created creatures. No other words in the Hebrew Bible defines God's act of care better than the word "hesed." "Hesed" is a complex word, but is only primarily used in reference to God in the Old Testament. "Hesed" is difficult to translate because the word infers a cluster of concepts, such as grace, mercy, compassion, faithfulness and reliability. It is primarily translated in the English Bibles as "steadfast love." Gordon Clark defines "hesed" as "not merely an attitude or an emotion; it is an emotion that leads to an activity beneficial to the recipient."¹² It is a covenantal word that describes the covenant relationship between God and the nation of Israel in the Hebrew Bible. It is this covenant relationship that gifted God's unceasing love to Israel. Because of this unceasing love, the Lord will never let Israel go. Although the people of Israel had constantly betrayed and were disloyal to God, God still continued to love them. It is through this covenant relationship, God continues to be kind, merciful and forgiving.

¹² Gordon R. Clark, *Word Hesed in the Hebrew Bible* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press Ltd., 1993), 267.

What drives a relationship? What makes a relationship grow? Certainly it is not by coercion or forcing someone to conform to what we want the other person to be. It is through love, care and investment in that relationship. Such is the case for God and His people. We are called to be the salt and light of the world for the Lord. Our God desires for us to live our lives consistent with His nature. If our Lord desires that for us, He will do all that He can to bring us into that relationship with Him. Of course, the words of John the Apostle in John 1:1, “Word becomes flesh” is the perfect example of this desire to bring us closer to Him. Our Lord will act towards our benefit, simply because He loves us too much. He will be our voice when we cannot find our voice. He will be our strength when we are spent. He will be our guide when we are lost. That is how we can grow in our relationship with the Lord. Because the Lord cares for us, we can grow in Him. That is the whole nature of care.

The concept of preaching as a means of pastoral care is not bred out of my own mind, but it was made clear to me in my own life struggles and experiences. It was very much a part of the Lord Himself, whom I believe, exercises care and love when He speaks to His people.¹³ If this is true of the nature of our Creator, how much more should we as preachers need to pay attention to this when we prepare our sermons?

¹³ This will be explored in depth in the next chapter.

Conclusion

The idea of this thesis-project would not be a reality if not for the death of my daughter. The Lord in his mercy has allowed me to process this tragic event for the use of my preaching ministry. However, this cannot be done only with my own sentiment but has to be biblical and workable. Hence, I will draw from experts of the field of preaching and pastoral care, bible passages, survey results and my own personal reflection to help me layout, on a broad canvas, a philosophy for preaching as a means of pastoral care and a practical plan for accomplishing it.

CHAPTER TWO

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY

In Isaiah 55:11, the Lord says, “So shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.” Because God is omnipotent, he possesses the power to communicate with us in any way that he desires. In Exodus 3, for example, God got Moses’ attention by means of speaking through a burning bush. God opened the mouth of a donkey in Numbers 22:28 in order to express his will to Balaam. Isaiah 6 records Isaiah’s heavenly vision and subsequent call to serve as a prophet of the Lord. When God speaks, his word will accomplish what he intends to accomplish. That is the power of preaching.

To understand preaching or to see preaching as a means of care we have to understand preaching in itself first. What does preaching entail and why is it an important component of our worship and church’s life? We have to look at the theology of preaching. I was reminded by John Stott’s conviction of the importance of getting our theology correct. When our theology is correct, the conviction would be proper:

In a world which seems either unwilling or unable to listen, how can we be persuaded to go on preaching, and learn to do effectively? The essential secret is not mastering certain techniques but being mastered by certain convictions. In other words, theology is more important than methodology.... To be sure, there are principles of preaching to be learned, and a practice to be developed, but it is easy to put too much confidence in these. Technique can only make us orators; if we want to be preachers, theology is what we need. If our theology is right, then

we have all the basic insights we need into what we ought to be doing, and all the incentives we need to induce us to it faithfully.¹

Preaching begins not because we love to hear a good story, or because of our obsession to tell our story. We are asked to preach not simply to fill our order of worship during service, when songs and reading the Bible are insufficient; rather the Lord commanded us to preach. The church has been commissioned by Jesus Christ to preach the gospel to all nations. We are to incarnate Christ's mission of coming to seek and to save that which is lost.

We are commissioned to preach. We are given the task to preach. The apostle Paul boldly declared the chief task of a preacher as being to "preach the word; be ready in season and out of season"² The joy of preaching, as well as the challenge of it, is the requirement of the pastor to be prepared "in season and out of season." In other words, to think about everything, all the time. The commission to preach, I believe, involves integration, construction, imagination, creativity, perseverance and disciplined thinking on a week-to-week basis. A pastor, who has been given the task to preach, prays and thinks about the upcoming sermon, contemplates many concerns all at once: the joy and sorrow of individual church members, the tension that is going on in the church, the celebration of wonderful news, current world events, and the pastor's individual struggles. It is in these chaotic instances of concern that the pastor must reflect theologically, marrying the biblical text and contemporary issues towards what the apostle Paul called "being prepared in season and out of season" in a way that is fitting

¹ John R. W. Stott, *Between Two Worlds: The Art of Preaching in the Twentieth Century* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1982), 92.

² 2 Timothy 4:2, ESV.

for a particular time and place. As Albert Mohler eloquently said, “A theology of preaching begins with the humble acknowledgement that preaching is not a human intervention but a gracious creation of God and a central part of His revealed will for the church.”³ The revealed will for the local church is not plucked out of thin air, but is the result of prayer and seeking the Lord constantly. In this respect, the preacher acts as a local exegete to consider the congregation’s values, worldview and framework of living as seriously as biblical values dictate.

Certainly, an awareness of what is going on in the congregation’s life, recognition of what people’s beliefs are (biblical or un-biblical) and even the preacher’s own struggles are great assets in sermon preparation. However, this deeper knowledge of the life of the congregation is only the first step in making a sermon relevant. The preaching pastor of a local church ought to contemplate these questions, “How is the Bible relevant in all these situations?” or “How does theology reconcile preaching in my own local context with pastoral care?” Perhaps even a more poignant question to ask is “How can the final script of the sermon, the spoken word and the content, be more listener-friendly and life-changing for the congregation than when they first walked into the church?”

The Bible is the result of God speaking. It is uniquely written for us. Therefore, it cannot be denied and cannot be distanced simply because we need the spoken word. For that reason, we need to look at how the Bible views preaching.

³ R. Albert Mohler, Jr, *A Theology of Preaching: A Handbook of Contemporary Preaching*, ed. Michael Duduit (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1992), 13.

Why do we preach? I think essentially, it is to hear what God has to say to us. The reason why God speaks to us, despite our rebellion towards him, is because he loves us very much. This is the unrivalled love that is described in the Old Testament as “hesed.” It rests at the center of the Lord’s self-revelation of his attitude toward his people. God has chosen to enter into a relationship with us. That relationship will never end. It is an eternal relationship that God has covenanted with his people. It is, therefore, steadfast and rock-solid faithfulness. Isaiah 54:10 declares, “For the mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but my steadfast love shall not depart from you, and my covenant of peace shall not be removed.” It is the type of love that continues to persist despite any sin or betrayal present. Because of God’s unfailing love (hesed), he graciously extends his forgiveness. Lamentations 3:31-32: “For the Lord will not cast off forever, but, though he cause grief, he will have compassion according to the abundance of his steadfast love (hesed).”

“Hesed” is to love as God loves. When God’s presence passed by Moses on Mt. Sinai and revealed his very essence, God proclaimed his great “hesed” (Exodus 34:6). Biblical scholar John Oswalt describes it this way,

The word hesed...[is] the descriptor par excellence of God in the Old Testament. The word speaks of a completely undeserved kindness and generosity done by a person who is in a position of power. This was the Israelites’ experience of God. He revealed himself to them when they were not looking for him, and he kept his covenant with them long after their persistent breaking of it had destroyed any reason for his continued keeping of it. ...Unlike humans, this deity was not fickle, undependable, self-serving, and grasping. Instead he was faithful, true, upright, and generous—always.⁴

⁴ John Oswalt, *The Bible Among the Myths* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 71.

We preach not only because we love the word of God. We preach also because we love the people under our care. We care and love them enough to want them to be more like the image of God. This love ought to be the main motivation for us to preach with greater purpose and intent. That is to see the reality of God in their lives. It is only through the knowledge of God’s “hesed” that the prophet Isaiah dared to imagine the purpose of suffering. If God is truly merciful and kind, then even exiles have a future. Because of God’s “hesed,” even those who are rejected have reason to hope. “Hesed” is not just a feeling but an action. God acts and God comes to our rescue. It is an act that takes place at our most unexpected point in time. A great example would be the story of how Isaac found his wife Rebekah in Genesis 24. Abraham was getting old and Isaac still had not found a wife yet. God’s promise to Abraham to make him “father of all nations” seemed dangerously hopeless. Abraham instructed his servant to go to Chaldea to find a wife for Isaac. After Abraham’s servant miraculously found a wife for Isaac by bumping into her at a well, he praised God “who [had] not forsaken his steadfast love (hesed) and faithfulness towards my master.”⁵

“Hesed” is what makes us a shepherd. It is this characteristic of “hesed” that qualifies a shepherd to be a shepherd. Without “hesed,” one would not be a good shepherd. God is a good shepherd because he possesses the characteristic of “hesed.” It is what makes God love us and care for us. God’s “hesed” provides a connection to his people.

⁵ Genesis 24:27.

That is what makes our Savior the Good Shepherd. Jesus referred to Himself as the “Good Shepherd” (John 10:11). The writer of Hebrews called Him the “Great Shepherd” (Hebrews 13:20). In Luke, Chapter 10, Jesus quickly enlists first the twelve, then the seventy-two disciples to assist him in telling the good news of the Kingdom of God and to minister to the needs of the people.

God as the Shepherd

The central notion of shepherding begins with the idea of presence. God as the Shepherd is present everywhere. Divine presence is what makes God the Good Shepherd. He was, he is and he will be present. When Israel was in the wilderness, God’s presence was manifested in the form of a cloud and a pillar of fire.⁶ When God cautioned the Israelites for their continuous rebellion and warned them that his presence would leave them, Moses quickly protested in Exodus 33:15-16, “If your presence will not go with me, do not bring us up from here. For how shall it be known that I have found favor in your sight, I and your people? Is it not in your going with us, so that we are distinct, I and your people, from every other people on the face of the earth?”

Tim Laniak’s comments on the presence of God in the lives of the Israelites are of three prongs: protection, provision and guidance.⁷

The Lord protected the Israelites throughout the whole exodus event. It began with how he brought the Israelites out of Egypt from oppression, guided them from the

⁶ Timothy S. Laniak, *Shepherds after My own Heart* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2006), 79.

⁷ Laniak, *Shepherds after My own Heart*, 80-82.

chasing army of the Pharaoh and protected them from being recaptured again.

Throughout the wilderness journey, the Lord protected them from their enemies.

The Lord is not only an able protector, but also a gracious provider. Laniak mentions, “God’s presence is consistently equated with divine presence.”⁸ The Lord consistently provided water, bread and meat to the Israelites in the desert. Another important aspect of God’s provision was his ability to give rest. He promised Moses in Exodus 33:14, “My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.”⁹

The image of God as the Shepherd is none clearer than in Psalm 23. After David became king of Israel, many of the Psalms he wrote referred to his experience as a shepherd. In Psalm 23, he compares God’s love and care for him to that of a shepherd’s love and care for his sheep. He opens with a statement admitting to and delighting in the shepherding by the Lord his God. “The LORD is my shepherd (Psalm 23:1a). It is a poignant and beautiful description of the relationship of a sheep and its shepherd and of the Lord and his people. David is affirming confidently who his shepherd is and in the same breath realizing he needs a bigger and better shepherd to oversee him.

Phillip Keller comments on this relationship: “It is no accident that God has chosen to call us sheep. The behavior of sheep and human beings is similar in many ways ... our mass mind (or mob instincts); our fears and timidity, our stubbornness and stupidity, our perverse habits, and all parallels are of profound importance.”¹⁰ At the same time, the shepherd feels a sense of ownership and responsibility for his sheep. The relationship

⁸ Laniak, *Shepherds after My own Heart*, 81.

⁹ Laniak, *Shepherds after My own Heart*, 83.

¹⁰ Phillip Keller, *A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1970), 21.

enjoyed by shepherd and sheep is not that of heavy authority, but of mutual belonging and appreciation. Sheep left alone and unattended are prone to die of disease or starvation and could easily fall victim to predators.

Kenneth Bailey added a further description of this psalm,

The Lord is my shepherd, among other things, means “I have no police protection.” In those open trackless spaces the traveler and his companions are alone. Thieves, wild animals, snakes, sudden blinding dust storms, water shortages, loose rocks and furnace-like heat are all potential threats to any traveler.¹¹

It is recognition that in midst of danger, the Lord is the one who provides a great sense of security when help is not available elsewhere. Bailey complements the shepherding aspect giving further security based on Psalm 18:1-3: “The list (in order) includes rock, fortress, deliverer, refuge, shield, horn of salvation and stronghold.”¹² This confidence gives the sheep a continuous trust to follow the shepherd, who knows the deepest need and want of the sheep. The sense of comfort is so remarkably pronounced that the sheep just wants to be with the shepherd. Keller adds to this remarkable comfort of the sheep: ‘No doubt the main concept is that of not lacking—not deficient—in proper care, management or husbandry. But a second emphasis is the idea of being utterly contented in the Good Shepherd's care and, consequently, not craving or desiring anything more.’¹³

¹¹ Kenneth E. Bailey, *The Good Shepherd: A Thousand-Year Journey From Psalm 23 To The New Testament* (London: SPCK Publishing, 2015), 451-453, Kindle.

¹² Bailey, *The Good Shepherd*, 417-418.

¹³ Keller, *A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23*, 26.

“He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters” (Psalm 23:2). The ability to lie down restfully requires freedom from threat and conflict and an ample provision of one’s needs. In his observation of sheep, Keller notes that at least four requirements must be met before sheep can lie down.

First, they must be free of fear of the unexpected and the unknown. Then, they must be free from friction within the flock; sheep establish rank in the herd by what is called a “butting order.” Third, the sheep can only lie down when they are free of pests such as flies or parasites. Finally, sheep will lie down only when they are free from hunger.¹⁴

The shepherd knows that the sheep needs grass, water and tranquility in order to lie down and digest their newly filled stomachs. Bailey makes a very important comment regarding Psalm 23:2: “The good shepherd ‘leads me’; he does not ‘drive me.’”¹⁵ A shepherd who knows a sheep well, does not force a sheep to go in the direction desired by the shepherd. But the shepherd leads gently and with care for the benefit of the sheep. Bailey continues to make the following observation about sheep:

In Egypt where there is no open pasture land I have often seen shepherds driving their sheep from behind with sticks. But in the open wilderness of the Holy Land the shepherd walks slowly ahead of his sheep and either plays his own ten-second tune on a pipe or (more often) sings his own unique ‘call’. The sheep appear to be attracted primarily by the voice of the shepherd, which they know and are eager to follow.¹⁶

That is what leading constitutes. The voice of preaching is to lead people to God. When a preacher senses the need of the congregation, he or she plays a unique “call.” Preachers

¹⁴ Keller, *A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23*, 35.

¹⁵ Bailey, *The Good Shepherd*, 521.

¹⁶ Bailey, *The Good Shepherd*, 521-524.

are called to say to their flocks what God has to say, show their flocks where it comes from in the Bible, and shepherd their flocks where it leads. He or she “calls” out to the people and leads them to the Living Water.

Not only does Psalm 23:2 tell us how the shepherd leads the sheep, it also tells us how the shepherd cares for the sheep. As the sheep depend on the shepherd to provide adequate sources of food, they also depend upon the shepherd for still water. It turns out that sheep are afraid to drink from a moving stream. George Lamsa comments, “Sheep cannot be watered at places where the water is swift.”¹⁷ If the shepherd finds a stream, he has to dig a short, dead end channel that leads away from the stream. Lamsa adds, “In certain places, where the water is swift, shepherds construct nooks near the edge of the stream to make it easier for the sheep to drink.”¹⁸ When the shepherd has built the channel, the sheep are able to drink from the still water to quench their thirst. Bailey noted that the shepherd will take whatever lengths or cost to provide still water for his sheep.¹⁹

“He restores my soul” (Psalm 23:3). The sheep are also dependent on the shepherd for safety and well-being. A sheep can become cast or stuck on its back, unable to get up or even roll over. Keller explains,

The way it happens is this. A heavy, fat or long fleeced sheep will lie down comfortably in some little hollow or depression of the ground. It may roll on its side slightly to stretch out or relax. Suddenly, the center of gravity in the body shifts so that it turns on its back far enough that the feet can no longer touch the ground. It may feel a sense of panic and start to paw frantically. Frequently this

¹⁷ George Lamsa, *The Shepherd of All: The Twenty-Third Psalm* (Philadelphia, PA: Holman, 1930), 43.

¹⁸ Lamsa, *The Shepherd of All*, 42.

¹⁹ Bailey, *The Good Shepherd*, 527.

only makes things worse. It rolls over even further. Now it is quite impossible for it to regain its feet.²⁰

Bailey adds that the literal translation of “He restores my soul” is “he brings me back.”

Here, however, the shepherd goes above and beyond that; he goes out to look for the lost sheep, finds it, brings it back and even if the sheep cannot walk because of fatigue, carries the sheep on his back.²¹

The idea of “he brings me back” is deeply entrenched in a shepherd that cares for his sheep. A lost sheep does not know where to go and certainly does not know its way back. Without the shepherd going out to find the lost sheep, the likelihood of the lost sheep being slain by wild beasts is extremely high. If a lost sheep knows it is lost it is without doubt that the hope of staying alive is slim. The only hope a lost sheep has is to be found by the shepherd and carried back to safety.

The imagery provided here in Psalm 23 can be a turning point in how we view preaching with care. We preach to “lost sheep,” “find them,” “bring them back,” and “carry them to the Father” again. If we can preach that way, less sheep would be lost!

Not only does the shepherd go out to rescue the lost sheep, but also to “lead the sheep to paths of righteousness.”²² After the sheep have been rescued, the journey does not end there. The shepherd now leads his flock of sheep to another pasture for more gazing. Bailey comments that the “‘paths of righteousness’ are those that imitate the ‘righteousness of God’ who, out of that righteousness, acts in history to save. His

²⁰ Keller, *A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23*, 61.

²¹ Bailey, *The Good Shepherd*, 529.

²² Psalm 23:3.

righteousness is a model for my righteousness.”²³ The shepherd leads his sheep “out of his namesake.” Lamsa explains, “The shepherd is very careful about the paths, because he loves the sheep, and for his own name’s sake he would do anything to prevent accidents and attacks by animals. He has to keep his reputation as a good shepherd.”²⁴ The shepherd does it out of his own integrity to keep himself as a good shepherd. The name “good shepherd” suggests a shepherd that will not lose his sheep. This is in keeping with the nature of God’s “hesed.” God’s “hesed” will go after lost sheep and will continue to look for a lost sheep. It is the relentless nature of God’s love that fuels the continuous desire to seek and look for those who stray from him.

“Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me” (Psalm 23:4). During the summer months, it was common for the shepherd to take his flock from the low lands to the high plateaus of the mountain ranges. The way was often dangerous and new to the sheep. It was important at those times for the sheep to ignore their natural instincts and to look to the shepherd with complete trust.²⁵ Lamsa explains,

Valleys of the shadow of death are paths which wind in between mountains where there are dark shadows and deep gorges. Travelers march slowly and silently in order to avoid being seen or heard by bandits. The fear of death is constantly in their minds. They tremble, they expect trouble or death at any time while they are passing through.²⁶

²³ Bailey, *The Good Shepherd*, 603-604.

²⁴ Lamsa, *The Shepherd of All: The Twenty-Third Psalm*, 52.

²⁵ Keller, *A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23*, 81-82.

²⁶ Lamsa, *The Shepherd of All*, 53.

Keller describes the dangers that the sheep faced in the mountains and the skills of the shepherd to protect them:

All the dangers of the rampaging rivers in flood; avalanches; rockslides; poisonous plants; the ravages of predators that raid the flock or the awesome storms of sleet and hail and snow were familiar to him. He had handled his sheep and managed them with care under all these adverse conditions. Nothing took him by surprise. He was fully prepared to safeguard his flock and tend them with skill under every circumstance.²⁷

David is familiar with such danger. As a shepherd boy he was accustomed to the landscape and the hilly terrain around Bethlehem, where he kept his father's sheep. When he found himself out of favour with King Saul, he was forced to take refuge in the caves of Adullam, the hill of Hachilah, and the mountains of Moab.²⁸ David knew all too well the dangers and threats of the treacherous mountains. It was through these dangers that the "Lord Shepherd" led his sheep, David.

"For you are with me, Your rod and staff, they comfort me" (Psalm 23:4). Here is another case in point of how much God cares for and loves us. David, the author of this psalm, places his utter confidence in the Lord who will protect and care for him. David, himself, who was a war warrior, could rely on his army or unassailable weapons to protect him. If they fail, the sense of fear will grip through him. But if the Lord is with David, the Lord is his shepherd; the Lord will lead David through his darkest and most desperate moments. David fears nothing "for you are with me." Indeed this is synonymous to the metaphor of sheep. According to Bailey, sheep do not possess any skills to defend themselves. They do not know how to protect themselves. They may be

²⁷ Keller, *A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23*, 83.

²⁸ 1 Samuel 22-23.

safe if they are flocked together but it is not a definitive safety measure for them.

Therefore, the sheep's only safety measure is the protection of the shepherd.²⁹ Hence, David writes the continuous presence of the Lord delivers him from fear. "Your rod and your staff, they comfort me."

The rod is of a particular size and weight in keeping with the grip and strength of the shepherd. It is a formidable weapon. Keller mentions several usages for the rod: "It was used as a weapon and symbol of authority; it was used in general to gently discipline a sheep; another common usage for the rod was to examine and count sheep. Ezekiel refers to passing 'under the rod' (Ezekiel 20:37); the shepherd's rod was also an instrument of protection for sheep and shepherd alike."³⁰

The use of the staff by the shepherd was to reach out and catch an individual sheep for examination, for comforting, or to rescue it from briars. The staff was also used for guidance to gently redirect or encourage the sheep along a difficult or dangerous path. The staff is used to care for the sheep as the shepherd uses it to lead the sheep to other pastures and streams. The presence of the rod and staff is for the comfort of the sheep. Bailey explains, "These two instruments are a pair. The first (the rod) is used to protect the flock from external threats. The second (the staff) serves to gently assist the flock in its daily grazing. The sight of these two instruments comfort the sheep."³¹

²⁹ Bailey, *The Good Shepherd*, 658.

³⁰ Keller, *A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23*, 94-97.

³¹ Bailey, *The Good Shepherd*, 711-712.

The Good Shepherd in Ezekiel 34 and 37

The importance of being a good shepherd in biblical narratives is clearly exalted in the book of Ezekiel. The prophet Ezekiel arguably lived during the most devastating time in the history of ancient Israel. The nation was destroyed, the Promised Land was taken, its people were in exile and the temple was torn down. The people of Israel were broken down to the extent that they did not want anything to do with God. They did not want to hear from God. It was in this conundrum that Ezekiel was summoned to minister to the people of Israel, primarily by bringing God's word to them. Ezekiel began to tell them about the nature of the good shepherd. He did not dismiss their present suffering. He was very careful in instilling any false hope in them. Ezekiel knew that by giving them too much hope, it may result in people resenting their situation and eventually God. Instead, Ezekiel told them the difference between a bad shepherd and a good shepherd. Bad shepherds are accused, found guilty and condemned. By contrast, God, the good shepherd comes, searches, finds, gathers, rescues, feeds, strengthens and gives justice.³²

God continued to redeem his people whenever they found themselves in circumstances which he deemed harmful for their safety and security. Thus he reversed the situation created by the wicked shepherds who failed to take care of the flock entrusted to their care and acted as foreign tyrants (Ezekiel 34:10, 13,27). As the good shepherd, God knows his sheep well and sets his heart on the flock. God proves himself to be a good shepherd who takes care of not only the flock as a whole, but also of the individual needs of his sheep (Ezekiel 34:16). He knows his people and makes it possible

³² Bailey, *The Good Shepherd*, 1268-1270.

for them to know him. He does this by addressing his flock as his own, “And you are my sheep, human sheep of my pasture, and I am your God, declares the Lord GOD” (Ezekiel 34:31). God is now among the people.”³³

Another aspect of preaching with care can be seen in the text of Ezekiel 37. A vision is described by Ezekiel where he is brought to a valley full of dry bones. Ezekiel is commanded by God to prophecy three times to the bones in the valley (v. 1-3). The first time assembles the bones together and restores flesh onto them, but they remain lifeless (v. 4-8). The second time gives them life when breath enters into them (v. 9-10). The third prophecy is an explanation of the vision; God, under his own providence, will bring the exiles back to the lands of Israel (v.11-14).

The first verse in which Ezekiel describes the “hand of Yahweh” being upon him is an important description. The word “hand” in Hebrew here indicates power, means and direction³⁴ in that it was the hand of God that was directing Ezekiel. It was not of his own doing. There are various interpretations as to what verse 1 in Chapter 37 of Ezekiel means. Some biblical commentaries render this a literal transportation of the physical body of Ezekiel to the said location. Others have interpreted this as a mystical vision into which Ezekiel had entered. Nevertheless, this verse indicates that God had complete control over what Ezekiel could see.

The dry bones in the valley mentioned in Ezekiel 37:2 probably suggest that a large battle had taken place there. Many soldiers had been killed and the bones had been

³³ Bailey, *The Good Shepherd*, 1406-1409.

³⁴ Hebrew Dictionary (Lexicon-Concordance), “Strong’s (Hebrew & Chaldee Dictionary of the Old Testament),” accessed August 4, 2015, <http://lexiconconcordance.com/hebrew/3027.html>.

laying there for a long time in order for them to be described as “very dry.” The Lord asks Ezekiel, “Can these bones live?” The obvious answer must be “No.” But yet, Ezekiel does not answer in that way. He says instead, “O LORD GOD, you know,” a seemingly confident and vague response that could be interpreted as “I am only your servant, and only you can revive these dry bones.” This is consistent with the idea that Ezekiel had been described as God’s conduit or representative in delivering God’s message to the Israelites. Ezekiel recognizes that humans are in desperate need of God and only God can make change happen. Only God is able to revive these “very dry bones.” Anything short of God’s help and nothing can change.

Preaching with care is knowing ultimately that it is God’s grace and mercy that gives care to the hearers. Preachers are the conduit of God’s care to revive those who need to hear God speak to them. Preachers are asked to preach, just like God asked Ezekiel to prophesy over the bones.³⁵ Again, Ezekiel does this not out of his own authority, but out of God’s authority. Preachers too are asked to preach not out of our own authority, but out of God’s authority. When this equation is properly understood, something then will happen. Ezekiel prophesied and the bones restored to tendon, flesh and skin (Eze. 37:6-8). In Ezekiel 37:6, God makes a promise that “the bones shall live and they shall know the Lord.” It is perhaps a promise of restoration for the nation of Israel.³⁶ Could it not also be a promise of restoration when preachers of modern day preach to the congregation?

³⁵ Ezekiel 37:4-5.

³⁶ Adele Berlin et al., *The Jewish Study Bible* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 1114.

After the bones are restored, there is still one important component missing. These restored bones are without life and breath. The restored bones are lifeless. In Ezekiel 37:9-10 God commands Ezekiel to prophesy again. This time Ezekiel is to call upon “the four winds” to breathe life into these restored bones. There are many interpretations as to what “the four winds” mean. The most plausible explanation is from Donald Guthrie’s commentary: “an Akkadian (Babylonian) idiom for the four quarters of the earth.”³⁷

In Ezekiel 37:11, God explains the vision to Ezekiel saying that the bones represent the whole “house” or “family” of Israel (v.11). The language of “family” is important to the suffering Israelites in exile. It is an assurance that God has not forgotten them. Furthermore, God promises them, “I will bring you back to the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am YHWH, when I open your graves, and bring you up from your graves. I will put my spirit (breath, wind) within you and you shall live; I will place you on your own soil, so that you will know that I, YHWH, have spoken and will act” (Ezekiel 37:13-14).

And it is in this sense that breathing becomes a metaphor for divine presence. Despite the exiles’ fear of being cut off from God, God is as near to them as their own breath. Ezekiel’s vision does nothing to alleviate them of their present difficult circumstances, though it does promise them a future in their own land.

Though they remain in exile still coping with the death of loved ones, still mourning the loss of familiar ways to find and meet God, they are reassured of God’s

³⁷ Donald Guthrie et al., *The New Bible Commentary Revisited* (London: Inter-Varsity Press, 1970), 681.

presence. The standing multitude of dry bones brought back to life now acquires a somewhat different connotation. Because God is present, they can breathe. And stand ready for the future, looking forward in hope.

Jesus as the Shepherd

This shepherd motif continues on in the New Testament, where Jesus now encapsulates the image of a shepherd in a more poignant way. The story of the Samaritan woman at the well with Jesus readily depicts a shepherd who knows the needs and challenges of a lost sheep in a caring way to help her see the light.³⁸

The story begins when Jesus and some of his disciples are returning from Judea. They had walked a considerable distance. According to John, Jesus was very weary (John 4:6). Jesus was very tired. Jesus then meets a thirsty woman. She is physically and spiritually thirsty. She has been disappointed many times attempting to quench physical and spiritual thirst. She basically ignores the thirst, burying it in the endless routines of life. She comes to Jacob's well during the hottest part of the day - "the sixth hour," according to John 4:6. She comes, as she does day after day, to fill her water containers. For her, life was becoming "an everlasting round of heavy water jars."³⁹ She is a social outcast. As she approaches the well she sees Jesus. He is a perfect stranger to her. Jesus, at this point, does not mean anything to her. He is just another man.

Jesus begins by asking her to give him a drink. He is genuinely thirsty. He does not have any buckets or pails to draw from the well. Jesus' intention is to bring the

³⁸ John 4:1-45.

³⁹ David Redding, *The Lives He Touched: The Relationship of Jesus* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978), 63.

woman to Another Well. Jesus wants to bring her to the only Well where her horrendous thirst can be satisfied.

Had Jesus begun the conversation where he ended it, telling her who he really is – “I Am” – she would have likely dismissed him. Jesus would not have been able to engage her or even help her. She was, however, caught by surprise. She expected “the stranger” not to acknowledge her. She had been treated in such a manner in her village. Instead, Jesus asked her for a drink. She is caught off guard. She exclaims quickly, “How is it that You, a Jew, ask a drink of Me, a woman of Samaria?” (John 4:9).

Jesus knew the Samaritan woman’s nervousness. Jesus knew the dilemma this woman was going through, but she needed to draw water from the well to drink and to fulfill her daily chores. Jesus knew that racial tension existed between Jews and Samaritans. Many Jews hated the Samaritans and many Samaritans hated the Jews. Jesus also knew the gender discrimination that was present at that point in time. C.K. Barrett explained, “A woman shall not be alone with a man in an inn, not even his sister or his daughter on account of what men may think. A man shall not talk with a woman in the street, not even his own wife, and especially not with another woman, on account of what men may say.”⁴⁰

Knowing all the prohibitions that existed, Jesus never allowed them to stop him from ministering to the Samaritan woman. In fact, he used the right words and the right approach in helping this troubled Samaritan woman see what she indeed needed. New Testament scholar Joachim Jeremias calls this fact, “... an unprecedented happening in

⁴⁰ C.K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text* (Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox Press, 1978), 200.

the history of that time ... Jesus knowingly overthrew custom when He allowed women to follow Him.”⁴¹

Jesus approaches the Samaritan woman with such care and love. With her heart having begun to soften toward Him, Jesus starts to address her thirst directly. “If you know the gift of God, and who it is who is saying to you, ‘Give Me a drink,’ you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water” (John 4:10).

She, however, misunderstands Jesus’ request, “Sir, you have nothing to draw water with, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water?” (John 4:11). Jesus then clarifies. In so doing, he speaks even more directly to her thirst, her deeper thirst, to all her unfulfilled longings. “Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life” (John 4:13-14). Again, she misunderstands Jesus because her deeper thirst has been quickened by Jesus’ words. She blurts out, “Sir, give me this water, so that I will not be thirsty, or have to come here to draw water” (John 4:15). She now wants the Living Water!

But Jesus does not stop there. He goes on to help her see the darkness in her life. He breaks through to the very center of her soul. “Go, call your husband, and come here” (John 4:16). She replies, “I have no husband” (John 4:17). Kenneth Bailey suggests, “She is again stunned, and probably embarrassed, and maybe even irritated.”⁴² Jesus responds: “You are right in saying, ‘I have no husband’; for you have had five husbands, and the

⁴¹ Joachim Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 2004), 376.

⁴² Kenneth Bailey, *Poet and Peasant and Through Peasant Eyes: A Literary-Cultural Approach to the Parables in Luke Through Peasant Eyes* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm.B. Eerdman’s Publishing; Combined edition, 1990), 162.

one you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true” (John 4:17-18). Why did Jesus do that? Why did he bring up that which stigmatized her in her culture? It is because Jesus wants her to know that he knows who she is and he wants her to stop living in denial.

Jesus’ love and care for her, however, goes deeper than that. Up to this moment in the encounter, the woman was beginning to feel loved. Jesus continues to help her to see her deepest struggles. If she had gone home before Jesus brought up the pain, she might have soon begun to doubt Jesus’ love. She would be wondering if Jesus knew her well, would he still love her? Would he still love her if he knew the reason she came out in mid-afternoon to draw water? In order to head off that doubt, Jesus exposes that which she seeks to hide. “Go, get your husband.” It is as though Jesus was saying, “Dear woman, it is the real you I love. I know who you are. And I am offering Living Water to you.”

In this moving story, we discover the incredible gift he gives us in the relationship for which he goes to great lengths to establish.

Jesus raised the husband problem because Jesus knew what she was going through. Jesus was telling the Samaritan woman, “I know who you are.” If she went off without this knowledge, she would not have received the gift of the Living Water. Jesus knew about this and he offered her this gift; indeed, truly the heart of a good shepherd.

Jesus truly demonstrated every single characteristic of a shepherd. He did not consider any cultural barrier, any stigmatism, any potential gossip or any potential danger

in communicating with a Samaritan woman. He did not ridicule the woman, but instead with a shepherd's instinct, Jesus knew what this woman needed. She demonstrated she needed water when she went to the well to draw water but Jesus gave her more, not physical water, but Living Water. Jesus knew she needed Living Water, not just water.

By being there, Jesus demonstrated that he was willing to lay down his life to protect her and shield her from any potential danger.

After receiving this care, she went to share this wonderful news with people from her village. She became an evangelist. She wanted to share that what she had been through was being taken away by Jesus. Her burden had been lightened. Her shame had been lifted. Notice as well, that she left her water bucket at the well with Jesus, thinking that she would come back for more. But she did not need to because Jesus had given her the Living Water. She has now been cared for and she is now equipped.

The shepherd motif in Jesus continues in John 10. This time, we see it in a more pronounced way. In John 10:11, Jesus declares, "I Am the Good Shepherd." Not only does Jesus declare himself as the Good Shepherd (John 10:11), he reveals what a good shepherd would do for his sheep - he knows his sheep as they know him (John 10:14); he lays down his life for them (John 10:11, 14, 15, 17 and 18); he also brings to his fold other sheep that are not of his fold (John 10:16).⁴³ Jesus is not just the shepherd of the sheep, he is the Good Shepherd. The word "good" rendered here is the Greek word

⁴³ Niceta M. Vargas, Word and Witness: An Introduction to the Gospel of John (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2013), 201.

“kalos.” “Kalos” denotes “noble,” beautiful,” “worthy” or “morally good.”⁴⁴ Kenneth Bailey argues that the word “kalos” has more of a “noble” and “blessed” sensitivity to the first century hearers.⁴⁵ However, the portrayal of Jesus as the Good Shepherd comes at a cost. Unlike other shepherds that we have talked about thus far, here in John 10, the Good Shepherd goes even further to show care for his sheep. The primary display of Christ’s goodness is in the fact that he lays down his life for the sheep. Bailey says this, “Here in John those predictions take the form of a statement placed within a song about the good shepherd. That shepherd will not only get hurt, he will be killed... the good/blessed shepherd “lays down his life for the sheep.”⁴⁶

Jesus as the Good shepherd cares for his sheep in a way that a hired shepherd would not. A hired shepherd, who does not own the sheep, and a good shepherd have a contrasted interest in the sheep. A hired shepherd may abandon the sheep and flee when a dangerous wolf comes to snatch and scatter them (John 10:12). A hired shepherd may not have any vested interest in the sheep outside of his job description. He is not required to put his own life in danger to protect the sheep. Jesus, the Good Shepherd, not only protects the sheep, he lays down his life for the sheep. Rudolf Schnackenburg describes it this way: “Being a shepherd entails a constant living for one’s sheep. And the shepherd-status of Jesus the shepherd, in which all shepherding finds its true fulfillment, makes

⁴⁴ Help Word-studies. 2011. “2570. Kalos.” 2011, accessed August 6, 2015, <http://biblehub.com/greek/2570.htm>.

⁴⁵ Bailey, *The Good Shepherd*, 3620-3622.

⁴⁶ Bailey, *The Good Shepherd*, 3798-3799.

itself manifest in the sacrifice of his life, so that he may make his sheep the gift of true life.”⁴⁷

A good shepherd protects his sheep by leading from the front. It is only when the flock of sheep is threatened by wolves, that the shepherd would quickly shuffle to the back of the flock to protect the sheep. However, most of the time, the shepherd would always lead from the front. The sheep listen to the voice of the shepherd so they could follow him. That is what Jesus does. He leads people to the truth, to faith and to the right path. Kenneth Bailey describes a good shepherd this way: “Also we can note that when there is the threat of a wolf or some other wild animal following the flock, on the way back to the village the shepherd does indeed follow his sheep, The sheep, once started on the way home, generally know where to go. But in the early morning, and through the day, the shepherd is always in the lead.”⁴⁸

Jesus, as the Good Shepherd, seeks and gathers scattered groups into one flock. As the Good Shepherd, he offers abundant life to those who believe in him. He lays down his life for his flock so that they may live abundantly. This is the highest expression of his love for them.

⁴⁷ Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to John*, Vol. 2 (New York: Cambridge, 1990), 295.

⁴⁸ Bailey, *The Good Shepherd*, 3620-3622.

Peter, the Shepherd

Peter, the apostle, gives us a description of what Christian leadership should be like. It is not a description of any well-known authority figures or any military headship, but a description of a shepherd and his flock. Perhaps Peter sees that the real value of Christian leadership lies within the humble role of the shepherd and his sheep. The truth can be said as well within the context of preaching. The model of a good preacher ought not to be a highly authoritative speaker, or a General rallying his troops or even a CEO motivating his or her employees, but of a shepherd who cares deeply for his sheep. It is evidenced in Peter's life that indeed he went through such a process. Peter, once a cowardly leader, had a renewed conviction. His instructions to the elders of the church to "be shepherds of God's flock" (1 Peter 5:2) is reflective of Jesus' charge of him at the turning point in his own leadership growth.

Peter was called to be a shepherd. However, did not start off that way. In fact, he was a direct opposite of the role of a shepherd. Peter was impulsive, ambitious, self-assertive and was quick to make any unfounded conclusion. He was outspoken and willing to question Jesus' actions and teachings (John 13:6). He was quick to make unintended commitments that resulted in abandoning Jesus during his time of suffering. However, Peter's transformational moment came in John 21. Peter's breakfast with Jesus by the Sea of Tiberius reflects a turning point for Peter as a leader, to be a shepherd of God's flock (John 21:17). Peter is challenged by Jesus. Reflective of Peter's denial of Christ, Jesus asks Peter to respond three times to the question, "Do you love me?" With each response, Jesus challenges Peter to care for his followers and to follow him,

asserting, “Feed my lambs” (John 21:15), “Take care of my sheep” (John 21:16), “Feed my sheep” (John 21:17), and finally, “Follow me!” (John 21:19). The commitment to follow Jesus meant more than forming a deep relationship for Peter. It was a commitment to the work of shepherding and the works of Jesus. The notion of shepherding is so important in Christian leadership that Peter had to change his style of leading. Peter had to understand that his old style of leadership was not like that of Jesus'. He had to change. Only when he started to change did he understand what Jesus required of him.

Therefore Peter can identify himself as “a fellow elder” (1 Peter 5:1). He is an elder, an elder who works alongside with other elders. Peter had something to offer or to address in his conviction of leadership to other elders. It is a conviction that comes out from his own life experience as well as from Jesus' suffering. Peter identifies with the suffering of Jesus. In 1 Peter 4, he describes himself as a “witness to the suffering Christ.” Bailey clarifies, “Peter saw Jesus suffer painful rejection, and also saw how Jesus responded to that rejection. As a disciple of Jesus, Peter was united with Christ in that suffering. He watched how Jesus dealt with ‘the agony of rejected love,’ and that agony became Peter’s agony.”⁴⁹ Peter watched how Jesus suffered and how Jesus was rejected. He felt the pain of Jesus at his rejection. However, Peter also saw the glory that came with Jesus’ suffering. Therefore, Peter knew that everyone who suffers can transform the suffering like how Jesus did; like how a good shepherd would.

A good shepherd endures the hardship of bringing his flock of sheep from one place to another place and risks his life for the sake of his sheep’s safety, even to the

⁴⁹ Bailey, *The Good Shepherd*, 4373-4375.

extent of sacrificing his own life for his sheep. A good shepherd must be able to provide security to his sheep when the flock is under attack from wild animals.⁵⁰ This is the metaphor Peter is driving at to his readers. It begins with Peter focussing on shepherding his own flock and teaching the church leaders to be shepherds themselves. His words are meant to help these believers, leaders and followers to endure the pressures and negative reactions from their unbelieving neighbors and even their own family members. These leaders and their followers are pressured, ridiculed and marginalized by friends and neighbours. In short, the sheep are under attack. Hence, Peter calls church leaders to be the “shepherd of God’s flock.”

Taking from this cue, preaching is the leadership of shepherding. Preaching with care reflects the posture of shepherding. The pressures to conform to this world’s standard, the negative response of professing our faith at work or at home and untimely anguish or affliction are the daily grind of most believers. A lot of church members come and go into the church on Sunday mornings without receiving any word of care or encouragement. Their presence is being ignored. Their concern is not being heard and prayers are not being offered. Again, in short, the sheep are under attack. Preachers are called to shepherd God’s flock through the spoken word and caring act.

⁵⁰ Bailey, *The Good Shepherd*, 4451-4452.

Conclusion

Laniak equates the importance of the pastoral role with the importance of the role of a shepherd: “Pastoral imagery encompasses shepherds and their flocks as well as the realities of the wilderness, the challenging environment equated with them.”⁵¹ Preaching with care begins with the heart and desire for the sheep to get more out of the sermon. This is not merely about them hearing the Word, but more so about how we can make it relevant to them. Pastors are to mirror the love that God has for his people. Accordingly, that love serves as the foundation of how we shepherd our sheep. Because of God’s very own nature, he will never abandon his people. His lovingkindness (*hesed*) will not allow God to leave his people. This is the biblical basis of a shepherding heart that all shepherds in the Bible take after. From the prophets of the Old Testament to Jesus and his disciples, it is the model of shepherding. Psalm 23 becomes the central paradigm of how this model of shepherding ought to be followed. Jesus continues to exemplify this model in his earthly ministry. Peter followed suit in his life and teaching on leadership. It is in this confidence that preaching ought to follow this model as well. This model teaches us to know and to care for the people under our care. That also includes helping people to embrace the surrounding reality in their lives. I think, if we care for them enough, the propensity to listen well will be much higher.

⁵¹ Laniak, *Shepherds After My Own Heart*, 77.

CHAPTER THREE

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The worst news a preacher wants to hear after delivering a heart wrenching sermon on any given Sunday morning is, “It did not cut it for me,” “You lost me after the first five minutes,” or “I had no idea what you were saying.” Any presenter who stands on a podium to present certain products or services would never want to hear such comments, let alone a preacher who works diligently in making the Bible come alive. No preacher wants to be irrelevant.¹ We all have the desire to use God’s Word to the best we can to communicate truth to our congregation and transform them by the Living Word. We work hard at it. We pray about it. We reflect on it. But it will not be life transforming if the sermon is preached out of the context of the congregation.

The Importance of the Spoken Word

A great sermon is not in how well it is prepared,² but in how much it speaks to the people. When a person listens to a sermon, still talks about it in the parking lot, and asks the question, “I did not tell anyone about my issues. How did he know my issues?” or “I did not know Jesus could help me,” then that is a great sermon. Mark Dever pointed out that the reason why a sermon is great should be because “God speaks.”³ That is the reason why we preach. We preach because God speaks. The notion that God speaks

¹ James R. Neiman, *Knowing the Context* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2008), 5.

² I am not dismissing the work of exposition, exegesis or hermeneutics. That is the basic work of a great sermon. NO sermon can be prepared without hard work. But the contention here is how much our congregation is able to get out of it at the end of the day.

³ Mark Dever & Greg Gilbert, *Preach: Theology Meets Practice* (Nashville, TN: B & H Books, 2012), 11.

becomes the very foundation of preaching. We learn in the Old Testament that the Lord God was set apart from any other false gods because of his power to speak, to command, to be heard and to be understood. A false god cannot do any of that. It cannot speak nor hear. It is not real! This is the very reason idol worship is preposterous. The people of Israel were warned numerous times of this reality. The prophet Isaiah alluded to this very fact in Isaiah 44:6-8. This passage implies the challenge that whoever claims to be god must speak.⁴ The fact that God speaks is evident in creation's narrative.

The creation of the world came about when he spoke into it in Genesis 1:1. The creation of the first mankind came into being when he breathed into them in Genesis 2. The first rule of living was given to the Israelites after slavery in Egypt by words. The Ten Commandments were spoken. God speaks to his people. God can speak in whatever way he wants but he has chosen us to speak on his behalf. God has chosen to speak through his people. Jesus' own ministry has also demonstrated this brilliant truth. For example, the miracle of the healing of the nobleman's son (John 4:46-54) and the healing of the centurion's servant (Matthew 8:5-13; Luke 7:1-10) reveal Christ as being able to heal from a distance merely by the power of his word.

Jesus never needed more than his words to heal or deliver anyone. He only had to say the word and the demons would flee. The centurion in Matthew 8:5-13 knew this and requested that Jesus should just say the word and his servant would be made whole. And it was so when Jesus said, "Go, let it be done for you as you have believed." Also, when

⁴ Dever & Gilbert, *Preach: Theology Meets Practice*, 16.

He raised the son of the widow of Nain (Luke 7:11-17), He only said, “Young man, I say to you, arise. And the dead man sat up and began to speak”

It is an important fact for us who preach to take note. Dever quipped that, “God speaks, and therefore we preach. As preachers of God’s word, we should understand how important and amazing it is that our God is a speaking God.”⁵ However, this also means that we are mimicking God’s voice or reproducing the sound of a divine voice. It is the primary way our God speaks to us. William H. Willimon illustrated this well, “The reasons for any sermon speaking to the hearts, minds, and souls of the hearers are always more theological than anthropological, due more to the nature of God than the nature of the preacher or the hearers.”⁶

Why Do We Preach?

A preacher has to ask the question, “What is the purpose of preaching?” The answer is straightforward. Following the model of Jesus, it is to teach so that people’s lives can be changed. The Apostle Paul, the great defender of our faith, made it his mission - to defend the faith and to bring the Good News to those who do not know Jesus. Primarily, the purpose of preaching is to transform lives. It is to help our congregation grow in their faith journey so they can submit to the Lordship of the one and only Living God. The underlying basis of these purposes is pastoral. Pastoral can be defined as shepherding a group of people with the intention to teach, to care and to

⁵ Dever & Gilbert, *Preach: Theology Meets Practice*, 21.

⁶ William H. Willimon, *Proclamation and Theology* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2005), 9.

equip.⁷ The effort of shepherding cannot be done without having the intention to care in our hearts. Caring is an essential building block of a great sermon. It shapes the sermon. It characterizes the sermon. It determines whether one is truly ministered to or not. Without it, borrowing from the Apostle Paul's indictment in 1 Corinthians 13:1, sermons can become a clanging symbol.

I often ask myself, "Why would my congregation want to listen to me?" They have enough going on in their lives to stay away from church on Sunday mornings. They wake their young children up early, dress them, feed them and trudge them to church. There are other alternatives, namely, staying in bed. There are far more entertaining activities, far more eloquent speakers and far more exciting movies to watch than to listen to me speak some truth⁸ into their lives. Surely there is something important that makes people go to church. Yes, God is the reason. But there is also the human element that is equally important. It is the human element that God uses to bring the Word to the words of preachers. As James Clark mentioned in his book *Dynamic Preaching*, "It is the transmission of God's truth through a person to a person."⁹ Those are words that God uses to touch people and help people to understand. All these words are packaged together, crafted intentionally and spoken confidently to help the very people that preachers speak to. It helps them to understand what it means.

⁷ The Greek word is "poimen" (Strong's Concordance, 4166) and literally means shepherd. The word "poimen" has been used 18 times in the New Testament. Notably Matt. 9:36, Mark 14:27, Luke 2:8, John 10:11 and Heb. 13:20. Matt Slick, "Dictionary of Theology: Pastor," *Christian Apologetics & Research Ministry* (2013), accessed January 20, 2016, <http://carm.org/dictionary-pastor>.

⁸ For better or worse, truth may be inspiring or may be prohibiting for those who listen to it.

⁹ James W., *Dynamic Preaching* (Westwood, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1960), 65.

But no preacher has any transcendent ability to know what is going on in a person's life. This ability to know is not a gift that preachers obsessively day dream about. It is the hard work of getting to know the congregation. It is a very important undertaking. Without the work of knowing our congregation well, the right sentence may not be phrased relevantly. The importance of that knowledge would help us to speak the right words with the right tone to our congregation to hear without them questioning whether the preacher knows what he or she is talking about.

I have always been a big believer of this truth: "it is better to teach a friend than to teach a stranger." A friend listens better. A stranger listens selectively. A friend is more ready to receive advice. A stranger is ever ready to repel advice. But if someone knows that we care very much for them, the propensity to listen well is greater. Therefore to be relevant, we need to care.

I have always wondered whether preaching and caring go together. We can certainly care without preaching. But can we preach without caring? Yes and no. Yes, because the Word himself is sufficient to transform a person. No, because a person may not be ready to receive the Word until this person knows the Word cares for him/her. In this knowledge-based era, people like to "try-out" before they commit. In a world where samples are a great marketing tool, knowing before a person makes a commitment is the prerequisite of understanding and accepting. "Why would I want to speak to him when I know he does not care?" is often the attitude of a teenager who refuses to know a teacher or a parent. This is also the attitude of many church goers. Although it may be less cynical than a teenager's attitude, it is nevertheless the feeling that is lurking behind a

person's mind. Such an attitude is making a mockery out of the incarnate God, whose very presence is present when holy words are uttered at any given preaching event. N.T. Wright speaks boldly, "... the sermon does what it does because the true God is a speaking, communicating God whose warm, creative breath became human in Jesus of Nazareth."¹⁰ A sermon is the live word of the Living God. It is "part of the continuing work of God in becoming incarnate."¹¹ One ought not to take the task of preaching lightly. Preachers are presenting the very presence of God to the congregation sitting in front of us waiting to hear the Living Word they have been waiting for¹² in the past week. They are waiting to hear how the word can be applied to them. They are anxious to know what God is going to speak to them about. They want to know how God is directing them in something that came up during the middle of the week. They want to know how to make a big, godly decision. A preacher ought to know all these nuances in the life of the church.

We need to listen to God and we need to listen to the people. I believe there is a very close correlation between prayer and preaching. God utters a word for the world to come into being. The very same word gives us faith, hope and love and the very same word gives us life. Therefore, our only response is to listen well. Listening well allows us to respond wisely. Our conversation with God is the bread of our pastoral ministry. Our conversation with people represents our life as a church. When we listen well to these two conversations, through prayer, our preaching ministry can be a formidable ministry.

¹⁰ N.T. Wright, foreword to *A Reader on Preaching: Making Connections*, ed. David Day, Jeff Astley and Leslie J. Francis (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2005), IX.

¹¹ Wright's foreword, *A Reader on Preaching: Making Connections*, ed. Day, Astley and Francis, IX.

¹² I truly believe even those who do not want to be at church, are still waiting to hear from the Living God. This is because we were created to yearn for our Creator. Whether we acknowledge that or not, or whether we know it or not, we are certainly waiting to hear from the Living God.

It is through our prayers that we are able to seek the conversation of our Triune God and to decipher the real needs of our congregation. Prayer is a form of pastoral care. We pray for those we shepherd because we care for them. Paul Bradshaw commented on this; there is very little difference between preaching and prayer:

In the biblical tradition there is little difference between prayer and the proclamation of God's Word. When we pray our prayer of remembrance we are also preaching, and when we read aloud the biblical text or tell of God's work in the world, we are also engaged in the prayer of remembrance. Worship and mission are not these separate things between which a choice may have to be made. On the contrary, they are the very same activity. To do one is to do the other. To proclaim the gospel is to worship God, and to recount God's mighty deeds in prayer is to preach the good news.¹³

An Exhibit or An Exaltation

The artistic value of a sermon certainly cannot be discredited. How it is spoken or how it is presented undoubtedly is a work of art. Some are better at presenting a sermon than others. But it should not go any further than that. So much so, people who witness the sermon's presentation admire the preacher more than the Word presented.

A sermon is not a piece of art that our congregation admires and appreciates, to be left hanging on the wall whose beauty is glanced at when we pass by the piece. Dwight Stevenson calls it "aesthetic artifact."¹⁴ He went on to say,

There is an art of preaching, of course, but it is more like the art of gardening than the art of painting or sculpture. And in any case, in this artistry the aim is not a beautiful sermon, any more than the aim of gardening is a beautiful hoe. The aim is human life captured the beauty of holiness that was seen in Christ. The literary quality of our sermon manuscripts, in most cases, will be less like the plays of Shakespeare and the Dialogues of Plato than like the morning newspaper, which

¹³ Paul F. Bradshaw, *Two Ways of Praying* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1995), 49.

¹⁴ Dwight Stevenson, "Eleven Ways of Preaching a Non Sermon," in *A Reader on Preaching: Making Connections*, ed. David Day, Jeff Astley and Leslie J. Francis (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2005), 108.

today is eagerly sought and read and tomorrow is cast into the waste-basket. And perhaps we would be better preachers if we had something of the discipline of the journalist who writes with all possible care, knowing that twenty-four hours hence his words will be as dead as a corsage the morning after the dance. The minister who regards his sermons as works of art and who is busy turning the sanctuary of his church into an art gallery for the exhibition of his masterpiece is in the wrong calling. The sermon is not an intellectual object to be admired for its aesthetic worth. Neither is it an intellectual object to be remembered, like a grocery list. ... A minister is not hanging masterpieces in an art gallery; neither is he nailing up menus on a bulletin board. Rather, he is a waiter, serving the bread of life to hungry people.¹⁵

Sermons are not pieces of art for a person to savour. Sermons are bread for feeding hungry people. Only those who are hungry will eat and even devour. But we are all hungry, waiting to be fed, waiting to be cared for. Having been cared for by the love of others is a wonderful, life giving experience. Having been cared for by the Word in the form of expressed words on a Sunday morning is profoundly transformational. Imagine someone coming to the church, waiting to be ministered to and he has no idea how the Word is going to affect him. He hears the word of care, the word that touches him because now he knows the preacher is not preaching to a bunch of people, but to an individual sitting there waiting to receive bread. A well fed soul is a satisfied soul that is ready to challenge the atrocities he/she faces.

Perhaps, some important questions a preacher needs to ask are, “How hungry are the people?” or “Who are the hungriest people?” “How do we know?” Craig Loscalzo answered these questions well:

The preacher who most engaged me did so because they convinced me, through their words and actions, that they cared for me. They spent time getting to know their congregation in personal and intimate ways. These preachers felt that their

¹⁵ Stevenson, “*Eleven Ways of Preaching a Non Sermon*” in *A Reader on Preaching: Making Connections*, 108.

call to ministry was not a call to stand in high and lofty places pronouncing judgments on faces without names.¹⁶

We would not have found this out until and unless we wait at the table. Unless we intentionally make our mission to know the people in our church intimately and personally, the challenge to preach a relevant sermon would be insurmountable.

A preacher that preaches a sermon with care of his/her congregation will garner a lot more attention than one who does not. This is simply because the preacher's words are followed by his actions and his actions are followed by his words. The authenticity of the preacher can move a person to listen more intently. In this current age, people are more perceptive. They can easily tell something real from a fake. Authenticity is something people crave for in a preacher. The Living God is the real God and as a "representative" of God, we too need to be real. Being real is not feeding our need of wanting to be praised or accepted, but to preach for the well-being of our congregation.¹⁷

Preaching with care allows us to preach for the well-being of our congregation. It allows us to go inside their world and understand their worldview. It forces us to wrestle with how we can challenge their warped worldview and reconcile it with the biblical worldview. Or it can help them to reaffirm or strengthen their godly worldview. It is the assurance that "my-pastor-understands-me" that can profoundly help a person draw closer to God. That is the difference a caring preacher can make to a person who walks into a church on a Sunday morning. Not being able to preach with care can lead to devastating results. Loscalzo warns us of that danger, "The preacher is living in a

¹⁶ Craig Loscalzo, *Preaching Sermons that Connect* (Downer Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1992), 16.

¹⁷ Loscalzo, *Preaching Sermons that Connect*, 16.

different world, immersed in fantasies, far from the pain, confusion and hard choices the people face. As they rise to go home, they go hopeless and helpless, wondering why the biblical message is so irrelevant today.”¹⁸

Loscalzo uses the word “empathy.”¹⁹ How can we use our imagination to develop empathy? To help answer this question, Loscalzo asks a number of questions, which I find very helpful:

What is it like to be? Consider what it might be like to be a parent dealing with an out-of-control child or a laborer facing a layoff or a person facing surgery. What questions do these people ask? What feelings do they have? What are their fears and expectations? How do they deal with ambiguities of life? How does the Christian faith address their issues?²⁰

Those questions are exploratory questions that assist a preacher to shape and mold and craft a great sermon. But more importantly it makes preaching relevant!

A realization of what preaching is NOT is perhaps the greatest insight a preacher could ever have. Preaching is not showcasing our oratory skills. It is not telling our congregation how much work we have put into preparing a sermon. It is not publicizing how mentally apt we are. It is definitely not how great a preacher we are or can be. It is helping our congregation bring to light the challenging issues in this life against the light of God. Loscalzo puts it this way,

... addressing the real-life needs of people, intentionally addresses the questions posed by the preaching situation. The preacher is keenly aware of the needs of his or her hearers, listening to their questions, concerns, hurts, needs, dreams and weaknesses and strategically formulating a symbolic response.²¹

¹⁸ Loscalzo, *Preaching Sermons that Connect*, 21.

¹⁹ Loscalzo, *Preaching Sermons that Connect*, 29.

²⁰ Loscalzo, *Preaching Sermons that Connect*, 29.

²¹ Loscalzo, *Preaching Sermons that Connect*, 33.

In short, it is to make preaching real. Only when preaching is real can people respond positively. A non-believer would be able to see his or her own folly. A struggling believer would be challenged to confront his or her own wrong doing. A faithful person would have his or her faith strengthened.

Caring as Encouragement

Caring is also a form of encouragement. For someone who has been a believer for some time, while his or her faith may be strong, there will be a time when he or she will wonder whether they were doing the right thing in giving away their money, in sacrificing their dream vacation to contribute to the church's building fund, to live in simplicity when they could afford to live luxuriously. Christians need to hear, from time to time, that their sacrifice for the Lord is right. Knowing what is going on in a person's life is a form of caring that brings thoughtful encouragement to the person. James R. Nieman is right to say, "Context matters in preaching."²² Realizing what our surrounding context is takes us to a place where we can address it in the form of action or in the form of a preaching word. It is to bring a person to a place where he or she can trust the Living God as the source of their life.²³ The most transformational act during a sermon is to help a person see God in the midst of their conundrum, and allow them to process that in their own mind, and offer a place of hope for them. All this can be done while the sermon is being preached because the context has been established when it is done through caring.

²² James R. Nieman, *Knowing the Context* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2008), 6.

²³ Nieman, *Knowing the Context*, 6.

Preaching then becomes personal.²⁴ It speaks to them, as if, the preacher were having a conversation with the individual while preaching the sermon. As James Nieman puts it, “It personally encounters us with who we are and who we might yet be.”²⁵ It brings to light what “made in the image of God” means to each one. That image is so personal, so refreshing that a person is so intrigued, and has no choice but to marvel at the image that God has for us. Preaching with care meets us at the level where everyone can learn and accept. It is not a lofty goal that is unattainable. It is at the level that one can see, know and receive it. Which means sorrow, plights, struggles, death, joy, good news all can be understood as something we all go through and are real. It is not some sort of a concept that we are forced to take up. If the word of God is not able to meet each person at that level, it would be meaningless.²⁶ As James Nieman said, “At a deeper level, we face a common human plight, sharing sorrows and hopes familiar to other persons. Preaching then meets us at this spiritual level of existence by inviting us to see our human dignity as a gift conferred by God’s mercy.”²⁷

I would add that not only human dignity but human shame²⁸ can also be conferred as God’s mercy to humble us and to teach us that we need the Lord more than we know.

²⁴ Not in a malign way, but in an encouraging way.

²⁵ Nieman, *Knowing the Context*, 11.

²⁶ Borrowing from Qohelet in the Book of Ecclesiastes chapter three, meaningless, in the sense here, is a waste of time. Our efforts in trying to preach a good sermon would tantamount to meaningless effort if we are not able to engage our congregation and preach only from the biblical text, but not also from the local context of our congregation. Not being able to merge the two contexts together is a fruitless effort.

²⁷ Nieman, *Knowing the Context*, 11.

²⁸ Which I believe is a more dominant trait in a human than dignity. Shame can be categorized into three different shames: “Shame of immorality, shame of abuse and shame of inherent abnormality.” Peter Krol, “Three Kinds of Shame.” *The Gospel Coalition Blog* (April 13, 2014), accessed January 18, 2015, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/three-kinds-of-shame>. The third shame is the most complicated. It is the shame of why-God-made-me-this-way. Why do I have a certain physical deformity? Why do I have a certain impediment? Regardless of what shame surrounds us, a caring preacher would be able to

Therefore it invites us to see our shame and be able to confront it. In my own personal experience, certain things can be said in the pulpit that helps a person see differently than in a counselling session. It is as if the Sunday morning word were so much larger, so much richer than a face to face conversation. It must be. It has to be. It ought to be. But those words can only be coined if a pastor knows the context.

But context can only be known if the preacher knows the people, their history, their circumstances, their life stories and their idiosyncrasies. John Dever puts it well, “People don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care.”²⁹

A question maybe one can ask is, “Why would a person I am preaching to care much about what I have to say, if he knows I just want to get through what I need to say on Sunday mornings?” If we do not care what we preach about or perhaps even have no idea why we are preaching this sermon to a bunch of people, we have missed the point of preaching. We have missed the chance to be relevant. The words that we want to hear after a sermon are not “What is the point?” but “That point spoke to me.” Again John Dever is right, “The core of identification in preaching is to let the people know you sincerely care about them. In one way or another, your hearers will ask, ‘Do you really care about us?’ They will watch when we ask ‘How is your family doing?’ to see whether we really care about their family or are just being polite.”³⁰

address it in a way of invitation for full disclosure and not cause the shame to hide further inside. Shame can be destructive, but God can restore a shameful person through someone that cares.

²⁹ John Dever, *Quality in Southern Baptist Pastoral Ministry: Summary and Conclusions, Phase II< Part I research* (Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky (typescript). A project funded by the Lilly Endowment, Inc.), 6.

³⁰ Dever, *Quality in Southern Baptist Pastoral Ministry: Summary and Conclusions, Phase II< Part I research*, 6.

Knowing the context is our cultural exegesis of connecting the biblical culture with our own culture. But in order to do that, an entire congregation must know that we love them. John Dever says, “Words such as compassion, empathy, sympathy, as well as their negative counterpart apathy, come to mind.”³¹ It is not that we use those words, but they are what we must have. Having compassion, empathy and sympathy are the necessary Christ-like characteristics that help us to care and listen well to our congregation. Dever is right again, “Preachers who identify with their congregations communicate a passion about what they preach, a passion for people, a passion for the gospel, and a passion for life.”³²

These, then, become a source of our preaching inspiration. The personal and private pastoral care of individuals and families involves their life stories. These stories are the stories in which life is made. People live through those stories. Communities thrive through those stories. Caring ministers often receive as much or more than they give in pastoral care of persons. These life stories are what Wayne E. Oates suggests, “...the stuff of which sermons are made.”³³ When these life stories are used with permission, with care and with empathy, they can be a source of edification for the whole congregation.

People need to know that when they enter into the church, not only can they see God, but they also know a shepherd who knows them and is tending to their needs.

³¹ Dever, *Quality in Southern Baptist Pastoral Ministry: Summary and Conclusions, Phase II< Part I research*, 77. Dever further explained the root for these words in Greek, “pathos” from which the English word “passion” is derived.

³² Dever, *Quality in Southern Baptist Pastoral Ministry: Summary and Conclusions, Phase II< Part I research*, 77.

³³ Wayne E. Oates, “*Preaching and Pastoral Care*” in *Handbook of Contemporary Preaching*, ed. Michael Duduit (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1972), 446.

People want to form friendships, not dissociate themselves. People want to connect, not disconnect. People want to be known, not brushed aside. Identifying with them is helping us to know their context. A scene that has stuck in my mind was when my preaching professor shed tears in the class when he heard one of his students' father passed away suddenly. He did not know the student's father, but my professor felt the sense of loss for the unbelieving father. I knew then, we had a caring professor who identified with his students. Because this professor cared for his students, we tended to be more attentive.

Caring Leads to Repentance

A sermon that is preached with much care leads to repentance. It is not that we are the reason why a person repents. Instead, we have become a conduit that leads a person to realise repentance. Edmund Linn said this about a counseling sermon, “A counseling sermon about repentance does not merely discuss repentance and the available power of God to conquer selfishness and tawdriness, but it sends people out determined that, with the power of the gospel, they will be conquerors.”³⁴ The principle here can be extracted for a sermon that preaches with care. Sometimes we struggle with how we can preach God’s truth in a person’s life without offending the person. Rebuking might be the answer, but it rarely encourages the person. It is more likely to take the other person to the other end of love. Speaking in love is not about being nice and polite. Speaking in love is about how much we care for a person to love Jesus more than anything. Therefore, it is not our responsibility to change a person. However, it is our mission to rouse a

³⁴ Edmund Holt Linn, *Preaching as Counseling* (Valley Forge, PA: The Judson Press, 1966), 16.

person's curiosity and attention in our sermons.³⁵ The choice of words and our intonation are important in helping a person to confession and repentance or compelling the person with no choice but to repel confession and have the need to hide further. Our congregation ought to be able to ask the question for themselves, "Why am I doing this?" or "I did not know what I was doing was against Scripture." This can only be done when we presuppose a near comprehensive knowledge of understanding of almost every man, woman, and child under our care. A preacher who understands their world, the demands they are facing, the complications of meeting that demand would do better in helping his/her congregation ask the questions themselves. Edmund Linn wisely advised us, "The preacher using the counseling method will learn to know these people, and will discover the nature of specific questions in their minds. Then the sermon will seek to answer these pertinent questions - not questions which people are not asking."³⁶

"Meet people where they are" is a well-known phrase that every preaching student is taught. It is also one of the most overused phrases in the preaching world. But the wisdom of it cannot be denied. It still rings true in the very heart of a great sermon. It is the same reason why Jesus came into this world. He came to meet us where we are, not where He is. The reincarnate God knew that we are incapable of reaching Him if He did not reach out to us first. The same principle ought to apply to preaching. This is with the conviction that preaching begins with the people, not with people fitting into our preaching method. A well-known preacher in the 1920s, Harry Emerson Fosdick, gave us a glimpse of what preaching is by comparing it with a school teacher, "Every teacher

³⁵ Linn, *Preaching as Counseling*, 16.

³⁶ Linn, *Preaching as Counseling*, 18.

knows that education begins with the learner, not with a subject that is to be learned. It adapts what is to be learned to the learner rather than vice versa.”³⁷ If Harry Emerson Fosdick found this truth that ought to be known in preaching in the relatively early 20th century, then it should be practiced all the more so in the early years of the 21st century. Preaching with care never gets old. It continues to withstand any new way that one can think of in preaching.

Thomas G. Long went even further. He says, “The word of God we encounter in the scripture does not attack idolatry in general; it dethrones our idols, severs the bond of our old and crippling loyalties. It is not the word of God in the abstract, but of God who is for us, of God who is against us in order to be truly for us.”³⁸ Thomas Long strongly believes that a sermon cannot be disengaged as a stand alone word that only speaks senselessly to any group of people who wants to hear it. It ought to be addressed to a group of people in their real and tangible world.³⁹ I could not agree more. He goes on and offers a solution of how we can do this. It begins with the process of bringing people to whom we are preaching to the bible and showing them how this biblical text can speak truth to them. But to apply the text even more personally is to see in ourselves how we, too, are struggling to be faithful. As we learn certain truths about someone, to a certain extent we find ourselves in the same boat paddling to find land. It may not be to the same degree, but it could be a similar element manifested differently. Thomas’ point on that hits home:

³⁷ Harry Emerson Fosdick, *What is the Matter with Preaching* (Harper’s Monthly, no. 157 (July, 1928): 136.

³⁸ Thomas G. Long, *The Witness of Preaching* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989), 55.

³⁹ Long, *The Witness of Preaching*, 55.

... we do this by heightening the awareness of our own struggle to be faithful. The more honest we are with ourselves about our own lives – the places of strength and trust, the crevices of doubt, the moments of kindness, the hidden cruelties – the more we find ourselves on common ground with the others who will hear the sermon.⁴⁰

I begin with asking myself a question, “How does this text speak to me?” Then I ask myself, “Do I see this in my congregation?” “Who are the members that I am aware of or that I have heard going through the same struggles, facing a difficult situation or pondering a major decision in their life?” As I try to put my thoughts into words, I keep the faces of those members in my mind to guide my choice of words and even the sentence structure. As Thomas Long said, “Some preachers find it helpful, as part of the process of interpreting the scripture, to visualize the congregation that will be present when the sermon is preached. They survey the congregation in their mind’s eye, seeing the familiar faces and the lives behind them.”⁴¹ I believe that is the most powerful and most relevant way to preach a caring sermon. To picture the images of the people we are preaching to, the looks on their faces when we say certain words, or what their reaction would be when we look at them is one of the most poignant ways of construing and telling the truth of the Living God.

⁴⁰ Long, *The Witness of Preaching*, 56.

⁴¹ Long, *The Witness of Preaching*, 56.

Relationship with Our Congregation

Why then, we need to ponder, do sermons have such poor relevancy to our congregations? If we believe that “kérussó”⁴² is the single most important task of the Christian church, why is there disengagement between the person who preaches the word and a person who listens to the word? William O. Avery and A. Roger Gobbel concluded that there is a fragment of relationship between the Word of God and the words of the preacher.⁴³ “There is confusion between that relationship,” asserted Avery and Gobbel.⁴⁴ Alvin Rueter upholds this assertion emphatically by citing our arrogance is the main culprit for this confusion of relationship.⁴⁵ It is our downfall. To be ineffective in the pulpit is having an attitude of superiority that can easily ruin the communication between a listener and a preacher.⁴⁶ Nothing repels and shuts a listener’s ear faster than the aloofness of the person standing in front of a pulpit. The attitude of the preacher is of utmost importance in giving care through the pulpit. We have to remember that ultimately it is not us that brings forth care; it is the Word of God. Preachers are only an instrument used by God to bring forth the right words, the right sentence to the congregation. Attitude therefore is an important aspect to remember.

Adding to Avery and Gobbel, I would also offer another component to the relationship between God and the preacher. It is the relationship of the preacher and the

⁴² It means “preach” in New Testament Greek. See Help Word-studies. “2784. Kérussó.” 2011, accessed December 10, 2015, <http://biblehub.com/greek/2784.htm>.

⁴³ William O. Avery and A. Roger Gobbel, “*The Word of God and the Words of the Preacher*,” in *A Reader in Preaching*, ed. David Day, Jeff Astley, Leslie J. Francis (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2005), 266.

⁴⁴ Avery and Gobbel, “*The Word of God and the Words of the Preacher*,” in *A Reader in Preaching*, 266.

⁴⁵ Alvin C. Rueter, “*Ethics in the Pulpit*,” in *A Reader in Preaching*, ed. David Day, Jeff Astley, Leslie J. Francis (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2005), 134.

⁴⁶ Rueter, “*Ethics in the Pulpit*,” in *A Reader in Preaching*, ed. Day, Astley, Francis, 134.

congregation. When a sermon is preached, there are three characters at play. There is God, the preacher and the individuals in the congregation. Everyone takes in the Word of God differently. The same word is preached, but not the same word is heard. All of us are made differently and not everyone thinks alike all together. It is the power of the Holy Spirit convicting each one when the Word is being presented. But the word being said can only be crafted if the preacher knows the life of the congregation. I concur with Alice Matthew when she says,

An amateur speaker starts with the question, ‘What should I talk about?’ The skilled speaker starts with the question, ‘Who is my audience?’ Before you can decide on a topic, you need to know whether you are being asked to talk to a group of teens, a group of business people, or a group of senior citizens. In such groups, the differences in interests, attitudes, and even vocabularies are somewhat self-evident.⁴⁷

Building a Caring Community

Preaching with care will help us build a caring community. G. Lee Ramsey, Jr. in his book, *Care-full Preaching* brings this notion to mind, “Sermons communicate care by their construing of the church, the people of God in the world, as a pastoral community.”⁴⁸ The importance of pastoral care does not have to fall solely to the office of a pastor. It, however, must be led by the pastor. It starts from the pulpit. It is here, in the pulpit, the significance of pastoral care can be conveyed to the congregation, not by simply uttering the word “care,” but by showing “care” in a sermon. I believe care begets care. In a Christian church, when a leader demonstrates care and love, it can spread like wild fire to create a culture of care in our churches. One person alone does not make for a

⁴⁷ Alice P. Matthews, *Preaching That Speaks to Women* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003), 17.

⁴⁸ G. Lee Ramsey, Jr., *Care-full Preaching* (St. Louis. Missouri: Chalice Press, 2000), 4.

caring church. It takes the whole church to care to regard it as a caring church. Preachers do not have to do this alone. We want the whole community to offer care. It ought to be that our congregation would be able to form in their own mind the importance of care and actually act on it. It only takes one person to care, to show the whole church how to care. Let's begin from the pulpit. As Rudolf Bohren in his book *Preaching and Community* says, "... preaching builds up the congregation so that it can fulfill the communal task of 'being a community of pastors'."⁴⁹ Yes, the church as a "community of pastors." It would make preaching the Gospel, teaching the Gospel, bringing forth the Gospel much more easier and become a way of life for the church rather than a dedicated month or week for missions. As John McClure alluded to us, "Pastoral preaching is preaching that promotes care within the church and encourages mission of care in the world."⁵⁰ It is reasserted again in Ramsey's book, "We are seeking to identify and bring to life the primary community of the Christian believer, the church, which has always been one of God's main avenues for caring in the world."⁵¹

If care from the pulpit is done consistently and done well, in the long run, it will create what G. Ramsey called, "a caring community"⁵² where care can be given from a larger pool of people as opposed to from only one. It helps people to rely not only on the pastor to give care. It also helps to dispel an old adage that "only pastors can give care" or "care can only be felt if the pastor shows up." As much as these silly notions still exist today in our Christian churches, a large part of it is our own doing. If we do not empower

⁴⁹ Rudolf Bohren, *Preaching and Community*, trans. David E. Green (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1965), 123.

⁵⁰ John S. McClure, *Preaching Words: 144 Key Terms in Homiletics* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), 100.

⁵¹ Ramsey, *Care-full Preaching*, 5.

⁵² Ramsey, *Care-full Preaching*, 5.

others in our congregation to embrace the importance of care, no one will want to care. We can instill and teach our congregation to care when they know the pastor is doing the very same thing from the pulpit. Pastoral care does not have to be dependent on the pastors alone but it ought to be dependent on the church as a community.

Thomas G. Long in *The Senses of Preaching* taught me something about the pulpit that I never thought of before or saw in such a way. “A pulpit is not a lectern or a podium; it is a witness stand, and the preacher’s task is to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth about what has been seen.”⁵³ Those words resonate with me so much because as a formerly-trained law advocate, a witness stand is a stand of justice. This is so in that a plaintiff, or a defendant, or an accused is being tried for a case against him or her, or a case for him or her. Witnesses are called to help solidify the case. Whether it is going to be a just trial or not, a large part of the trial will depend on the testimony of the witnesses. To equate a pulpit to a witness stand is something foreign to me, but it begins to convict me. At the end of the day, the very reason for us to preach is to bring forth to the people the very truth of the God we worship and call Lord, to the people. We are “testifying” for God. It is in this testimony that people get to know our Heavenly Father better. We preach so much about the God who loves, the God who cares and the God who forgives, yet if these attributes are not shown on the pulpit by the very person who proclaims them, those attributes will only become a reality that does not hold any evidence. It turns out to be a fleeting reality! Preaching with care can reverse this pompous declaration of testimony. It puts us on the road of reality and care to make our sermons pertinent and relevant. Isn’t this what we want?

⁵³ Thomas G. Long, *The Senses of Preaching* (Atlanta, Georgia: John Knox Press, 1988), 4.

Conclusion

Our God is a speaking God. That forms the very basis of why we preach and more so, the basis of why we must have the element of pastoral care in our preaching. When God speaks, it is not out of context but knowing and understanding what the hearers need to hear. When a sermon is crafted carefully and developed well, it is a form of caring. Good preaching provides pastoral care and at the same time good preaching is formed by pastoral care. The unity of preaching and pastoral care is the idea that leads the church to become a more caring community and compassionate ministry.

CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS OF SURVEY RESULTS

In order to evaluate whether preaching can be used as a means of pastoral care, both written surveys and semi-structured interviews were conducted. The questions in the written surveys and semi-structured interviews were reviewed, guided and approved by Dr. Bryan Auday.¹ The written survey was distributed to a group of pastors and lay leaders with an initial intention of a minimum of thirty respondents, but not exceeding thirty-five respondents. In the end, there were thirty-eight anonymous respondents.

The written survey was sent out to pastors and lay leaders who in turn not only completed the survey, but also helped to distribute it to their own congregations. Therefore, none of the names of the respondents were made known when the survey results came back.

At the outset, I reckoned that it would not be easy to collect all of the results back in a timely manner and still have well thought out answers from all respondents. Some may prayerfully consider the importance of such information. Some may do it out of duty to their pastor or friend and some may reluctantly complete the questionnaire for other reasons.

Therefore, it would be beneficial to have a second method of gathering information. I set up semi-structured interviews with pastors and lay-preachers with a minimum participation of six but not exceeding eight participants. I managed to gather four pastors and two lay-preachers. The purpose of this methodology is to have a more

¹ Dr. Brian Auday, Professor of Psychology, Gordon College, Wenham, MA. The written survey and semi-structured interview questions were sent out to Dr. Auday on Jul 22, 2014 and received back on Aug 2, 2014.

in-depth understanding of the participants' thoughts regarding the idea of pastoral care in preaching.

The combination of these two methods of gathering data will help me answer the question "Can preaching be used as a means of pastoral care?" either directly or indirectly.

The Structure of the Surveys

Written Survey

The first group of questions in the written survey consisted of two pre-questions to determine the gender and age group of the respondents followed by twenty-three statements.² The respondents circled the response that most accurately represented the respondent's agreement or disagreement with the statement. Such a format does not require an inordinate amount of time for the respondents to complete the survey.

I developed statements that would enable me to gain an understanding of two things: statements about pastors and statements about sermons. The purpose of statements about pastors was to research the role of shepherding and to learn how important it is for pastors to love people. I also wanted to find out where a pastor stands in the role of pastoral care in terms of calling people in their homes, paying attention to their children, visiting the sick in hospitals and nursing homes, and praying for the downtrodden and lonely. The ability to speak well may not be as paramount as the role of a servant-shepherd.

The goal of the statements about sermons was to identify how a biblical passage related to the local context and also to Scripture. It also identifies the pastors who

² The survey was sent out on February 24, 2015.

understand the hearers of the sermon and speak and tailor their sermons accordingly.

What is the purpose of the sermon? For those who will hear the sermon, how does the passage apply to his/her life?

The survey was sent out via email and word of mouth to pastors and lay preachers in the Vancouver area and all the responses came back within four months.

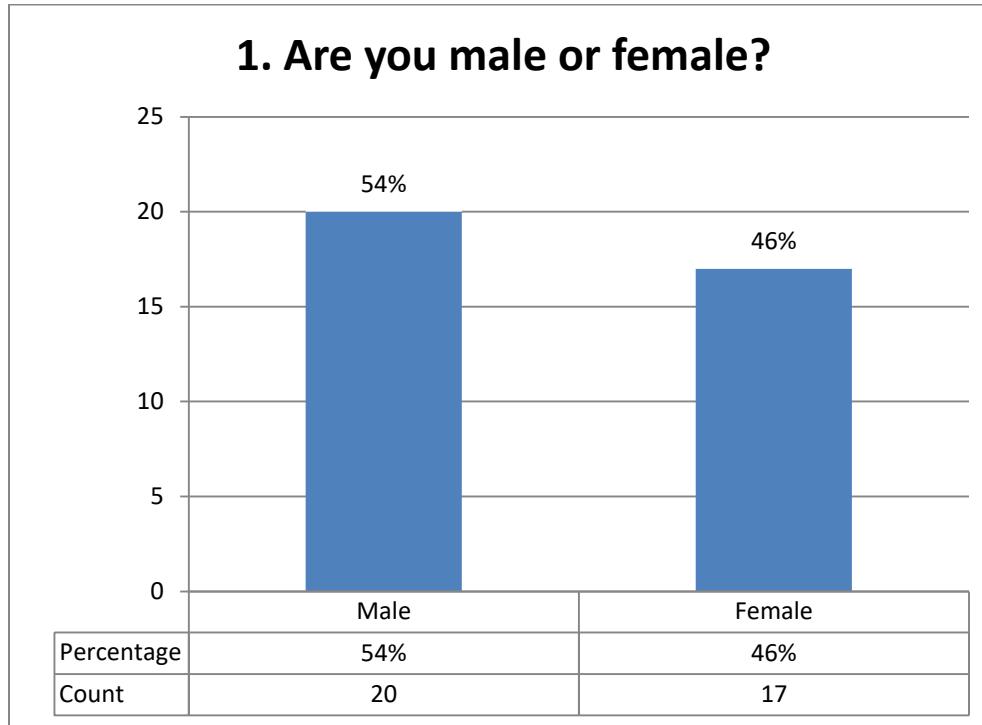
Semi-Structured Interview

The second survey, conducted in the form of a semi-structured interview, consisted of seven questions.³ The purpose of the first question was to elicit information on the importance of preaching. The second question was designed to obtain any theological background or understanding of preaching. The third question was to ascertain whether there was any correlation between preaching and the congregation. The fourth question was to find out whether the pastor believed he or she was the primary care-giver of the congregation and also aimed at discovering the proportion of pastoral care provided by the pastor in contrast to that provided by others. The fifth question was a direct question to help the pastor evaluate the real possibility of a correlation between preaching and pastoral care and also asked for personal insights into preaching and pastoral care. The sixth question related to the use of pastoral care in sermon preparation. The seventh question inquired about the flexibility and ability of the pastor to change a sermon if a crisis arose in the congregation at the last minute. The eighth question was aimed at whether the congregation felt a genuine care from the pastor from the pulpit.

³ The focus group met on April 8, 2015 over brunch at a local, quiet restaurant in Vancouver, BC.

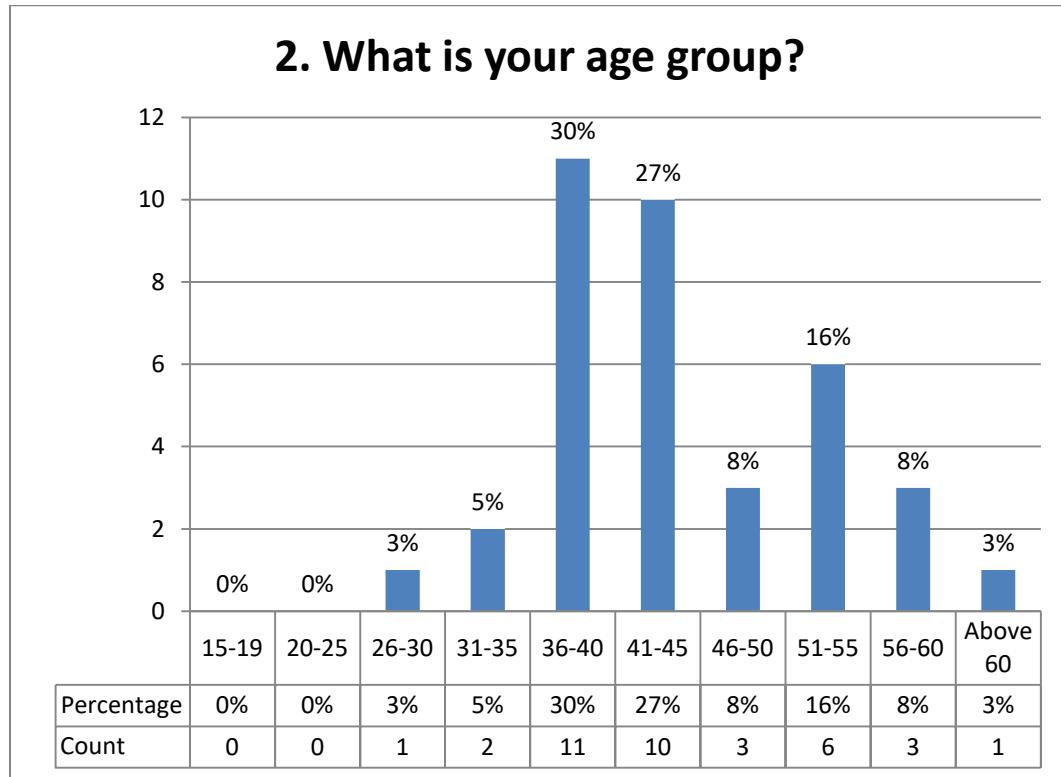
The Result of the Written Survey

1. Are you male or female?



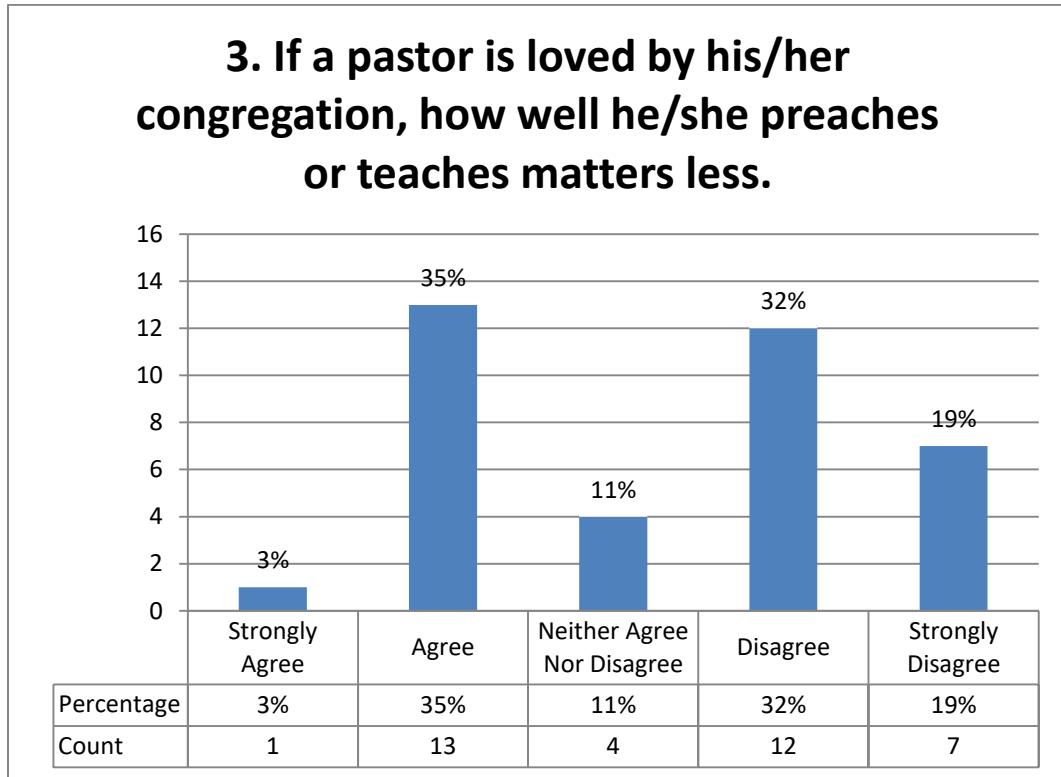
Observation: The respondents were somewhat equally balanced between the two genders. This was ideal as it was important to gauge the perspective and understanding of both genders.

2. What is your age group?



Observation: The bulk of the respondents fell in the 36-40 and 41-45 age-groups, which was not surprising as most respondents were my peers.

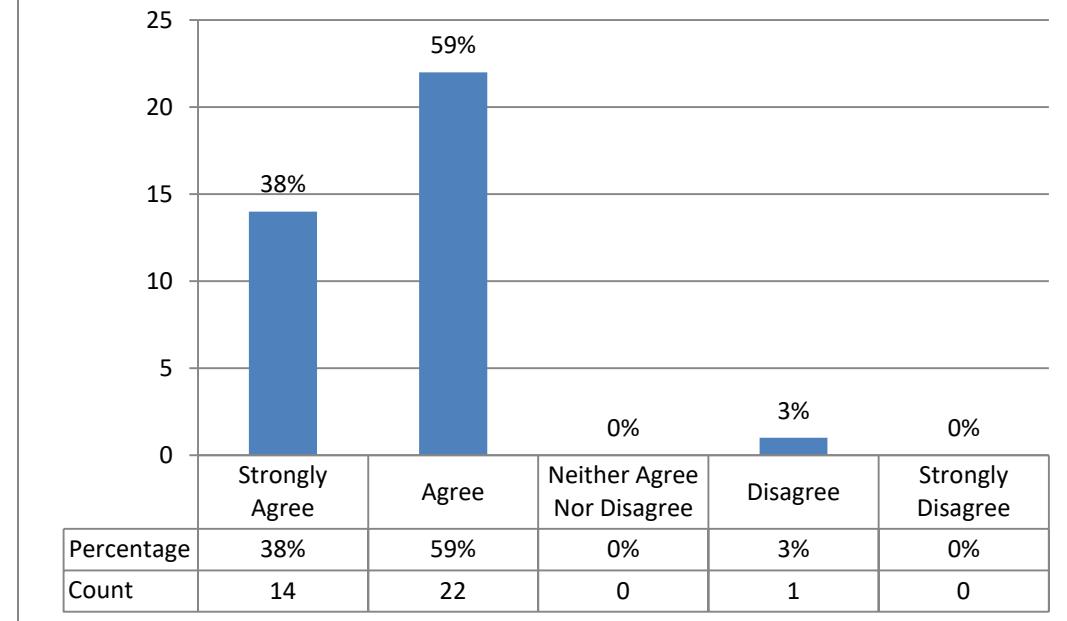
3. If a pastor is loved by his/her congregation, how well he/she preaches or teaches matters less.



Observation: There is a sharp disagreement between those who voted agree and disagree. However, the combination of the “Strongly Disagree” and “Disagree” was 51% and the combination of “Strongly Agree” and “Agree” was only 38%. My hypothesis was that a pastor’s ability to preach would not be correlated to how much he/she is loved by the congregation. However, I wonder how many of those respondents were from big churches and how many were from small churches.

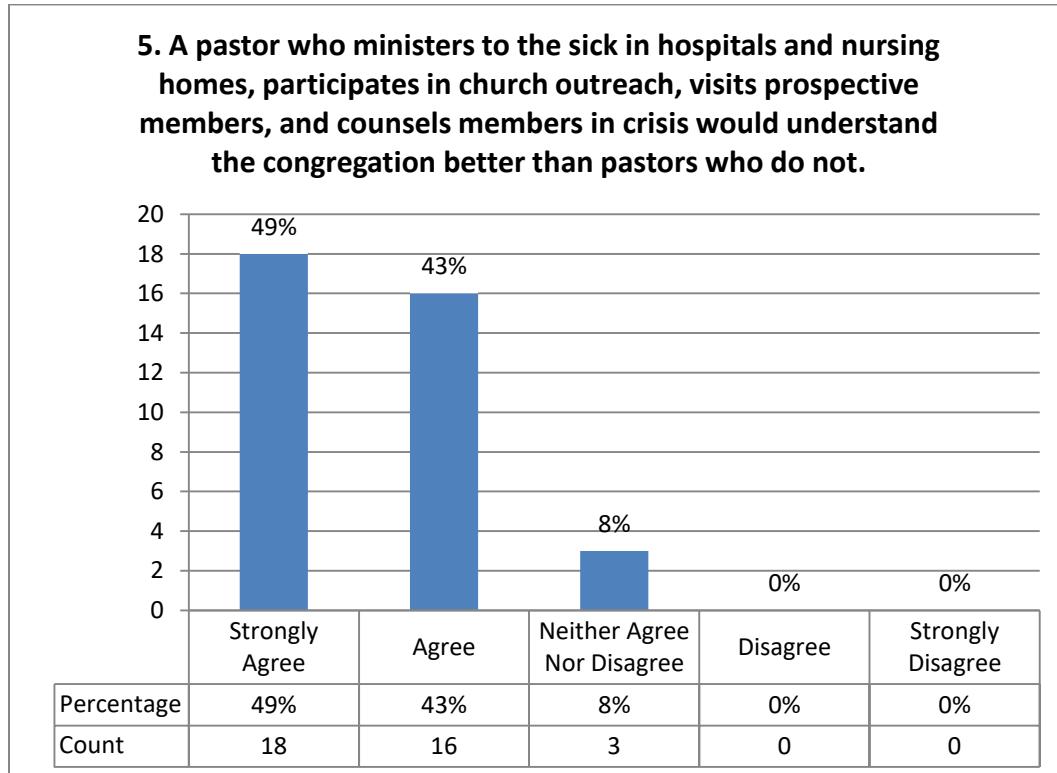
4. A pastor must involve himself/herself with the needs of others.

4. A pastor must involve himself/herself with the needs of others.



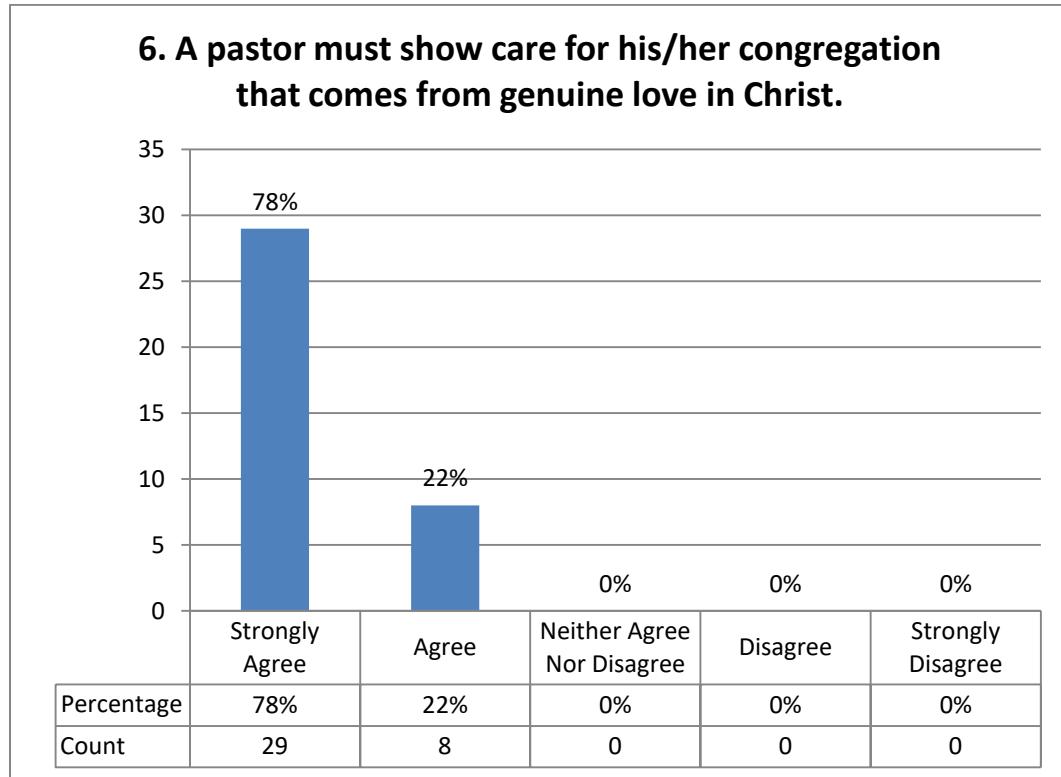
Observation: Indeed, almost everyone desires and wants a pastor who cares for his/her flock.

5. A pastor who ministers to the sick in hospitals and nursing homes, participates in church outreach, visits prospective members, and counsels members in crisis would understand the congregation better than pastors who do not.



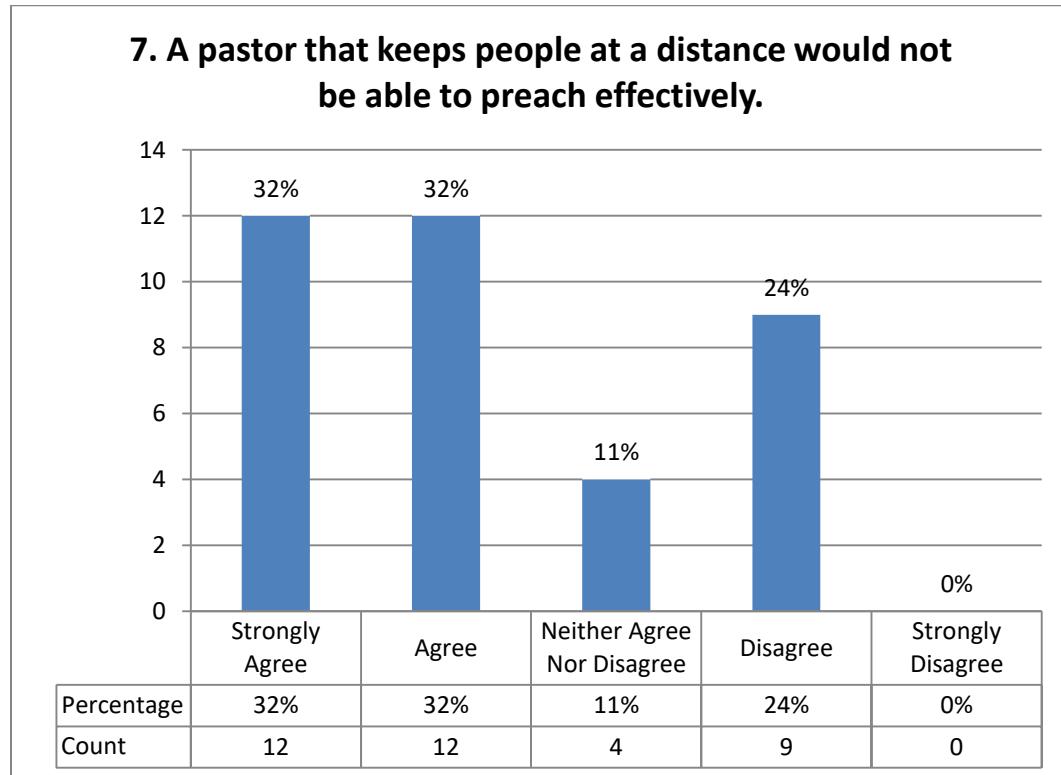
Observation: This is another indication that a caring pastor is most admired.

6. A pastor must show care for his/her congregation that comes from genuine love in Christ.



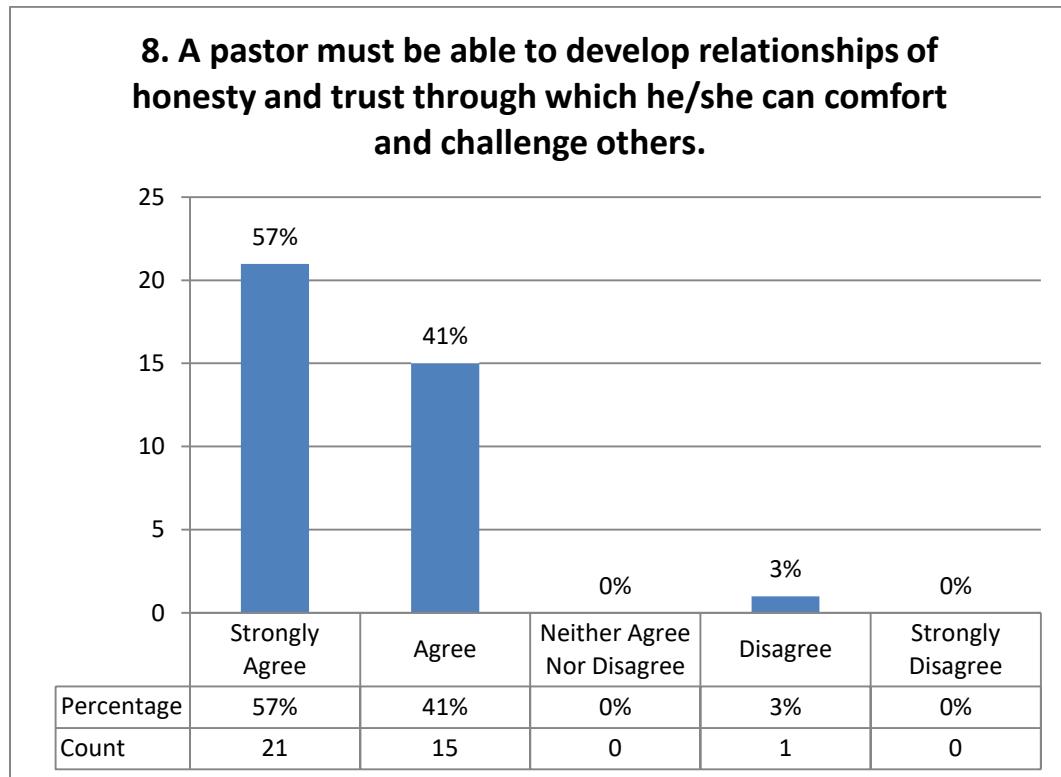
Observation: Again, the responses for this question show that a caring pastor is much desired.

7. A pastor that keeps people at a distance would not be able to preach effectively.



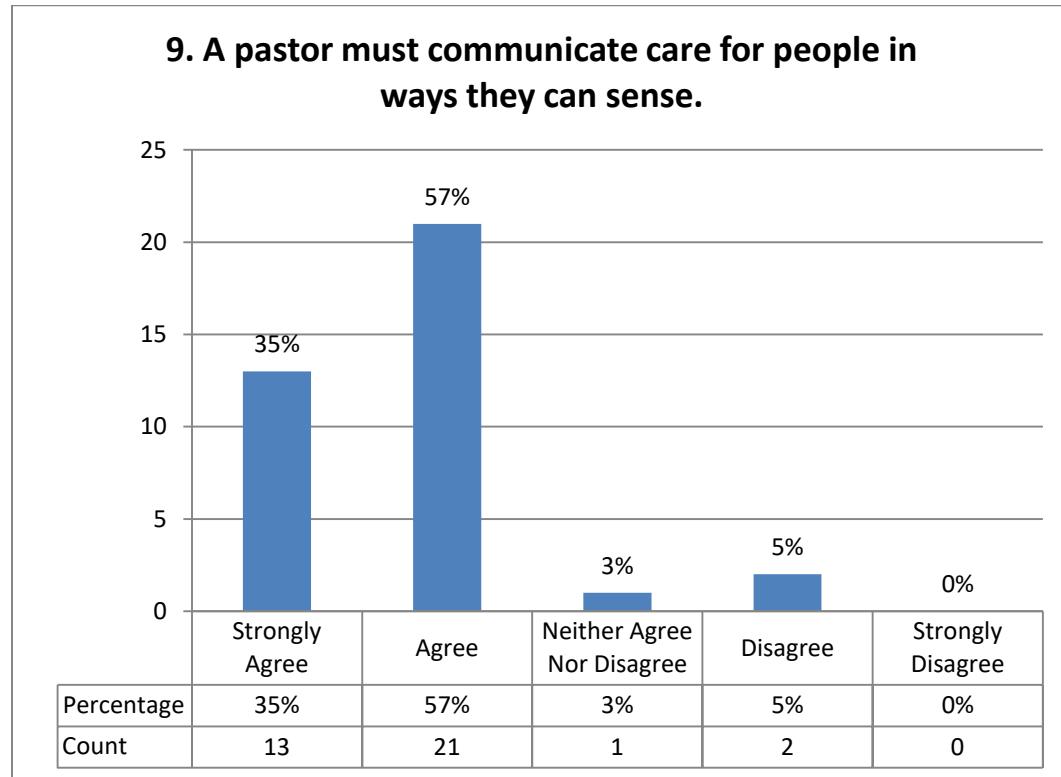
Observation: The majority agree that a pastor must be able to connect with his/her congregation.

8. A pastor must be able to develop relationships of honesty and trust through which he/she can comfort and challenge others.



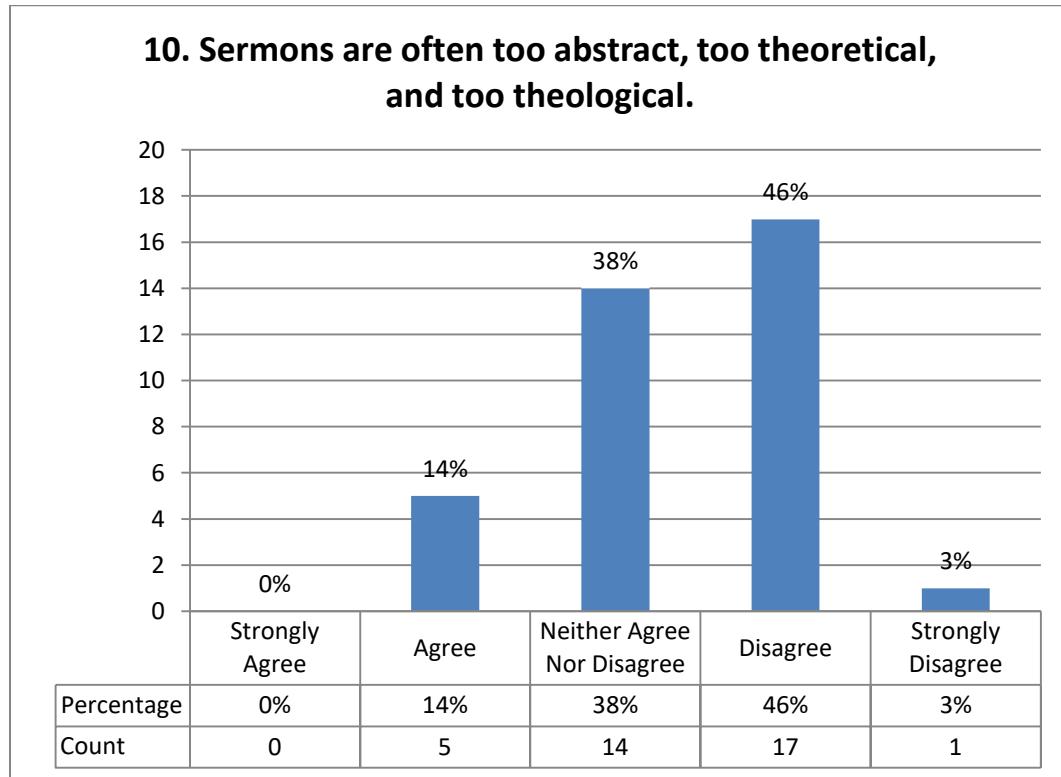
Observation: Almost everyone agrees that if a pastor knows his/her congregation, it would be easier to challenge and even rebuke those who make spiritually devastating decisions.

9. A pastor must communicate care for people in ways they can sense.



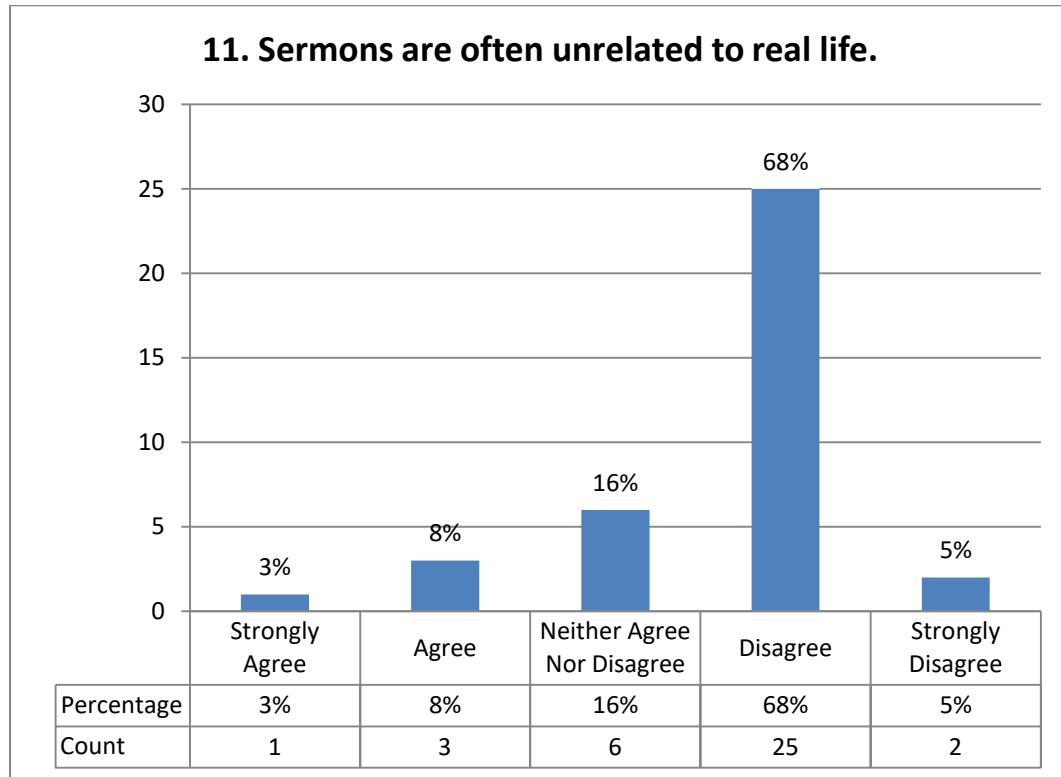
Observation: People want to know that the pastor is genuinely caring and loving to his/her congregation.

10. *Sermons are often too abstract, too theoretical, and too theological.*



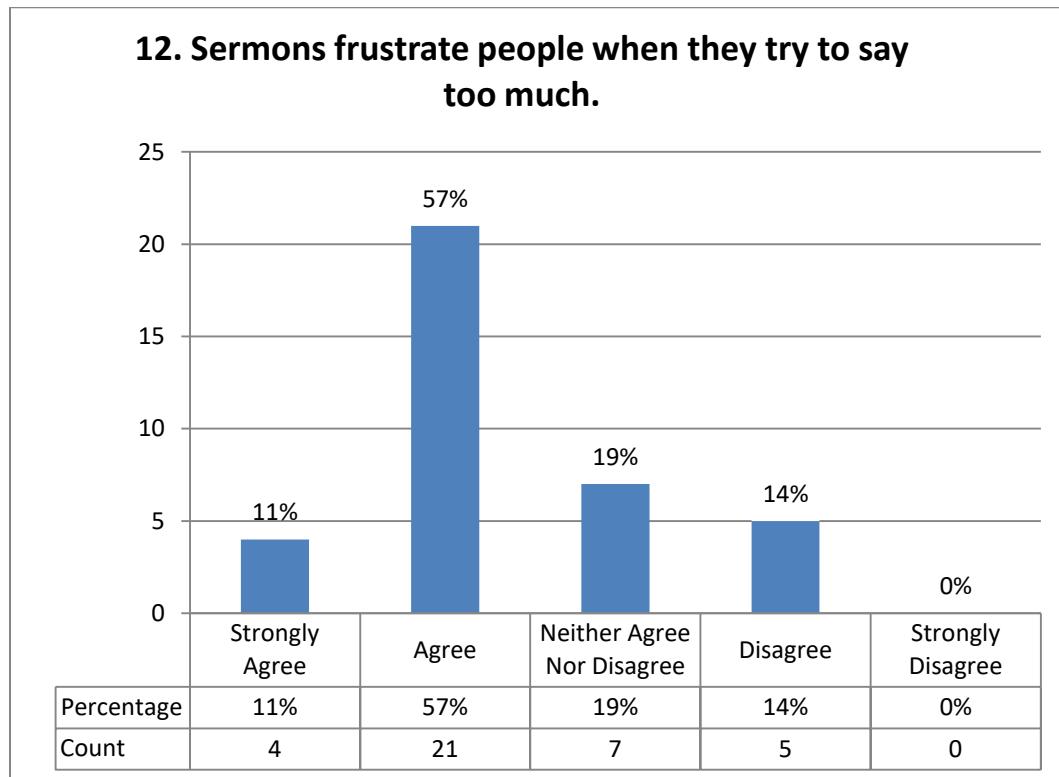
Observation: The combination of “Disagree” and “Strongly Disagree” was 49%, which indicates that a significant percentage of the respondents did not find sermons were too abstract, too theoretical and too theological. However, 14% agreed with this survey question and 38% responded “Neither Agree Nor Disagree”. Given that 38% of the respondents are neutral in their stand, there is a possibility that people surveyed would support the hypotheses made in chapter one that sermons are disconnected from the congregation.

11. *Sermons are often unrelated to real life.*



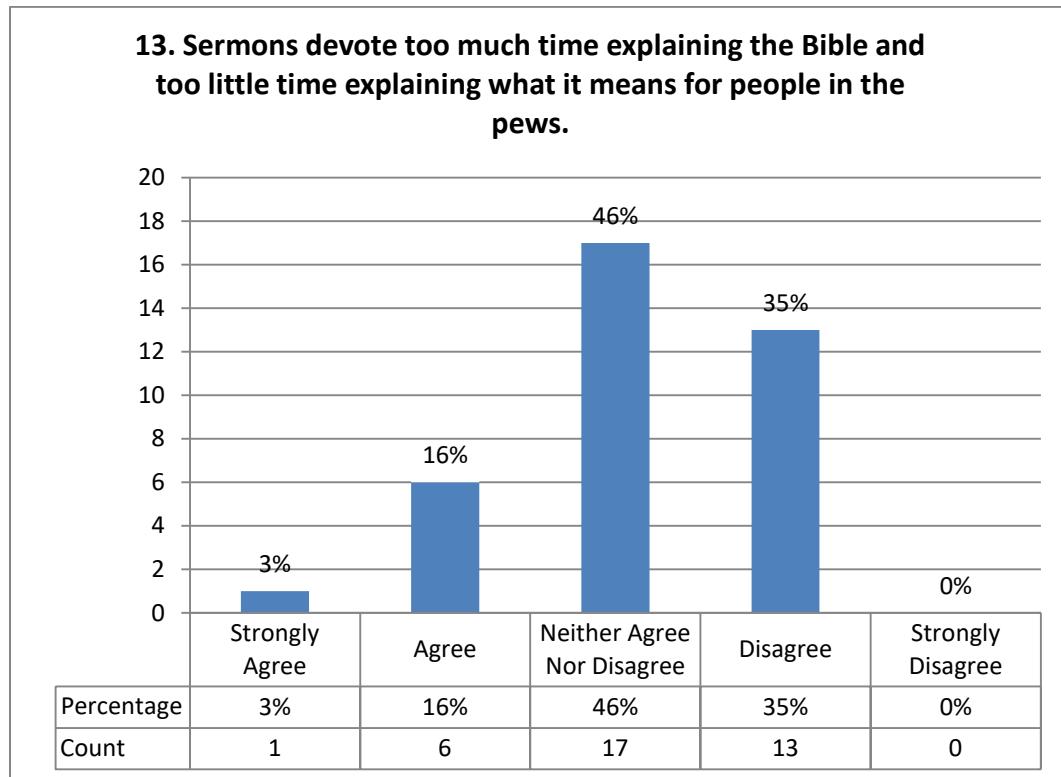
Observation: There was a positive response from people indicating they can identify with the idea that sermons were written with people in mind.

12. *Sermons frustrate people when they try to say too much.*



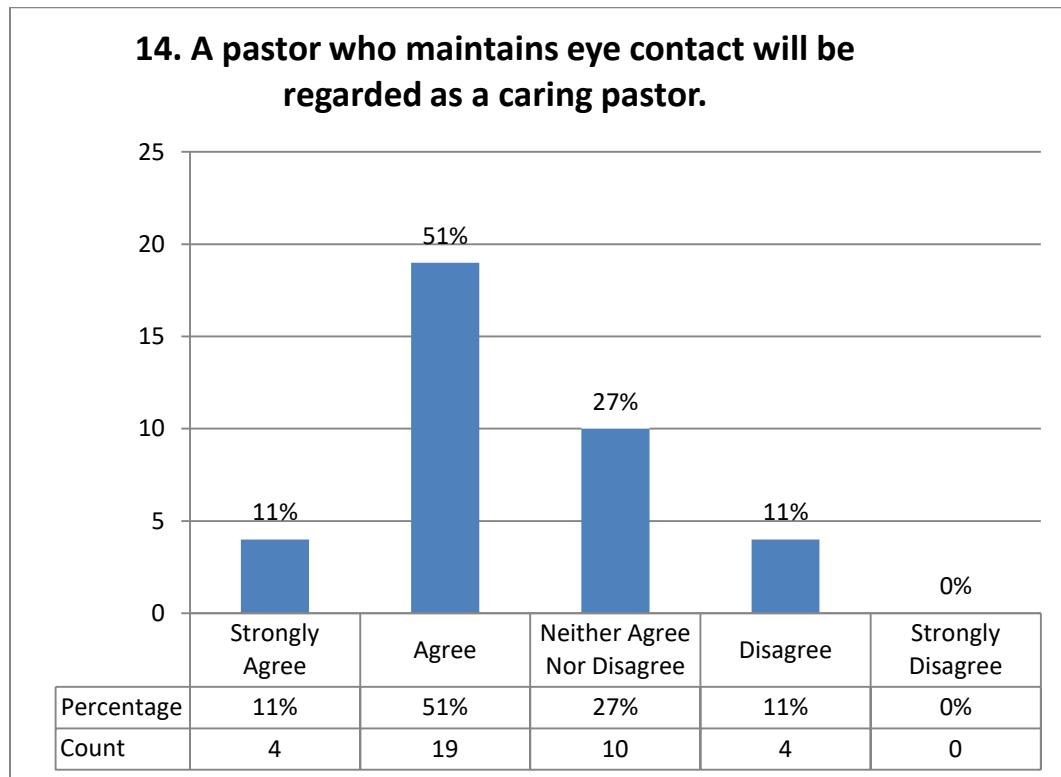
Observation: My speculation is that people would like to hear a simple and clear message that connects the reality of the Bible with the realities of life and not have to hear too much theological jargon.

13. Sermons devote too much time explaining the Bible and too little time explaining what it means for people in the pews.



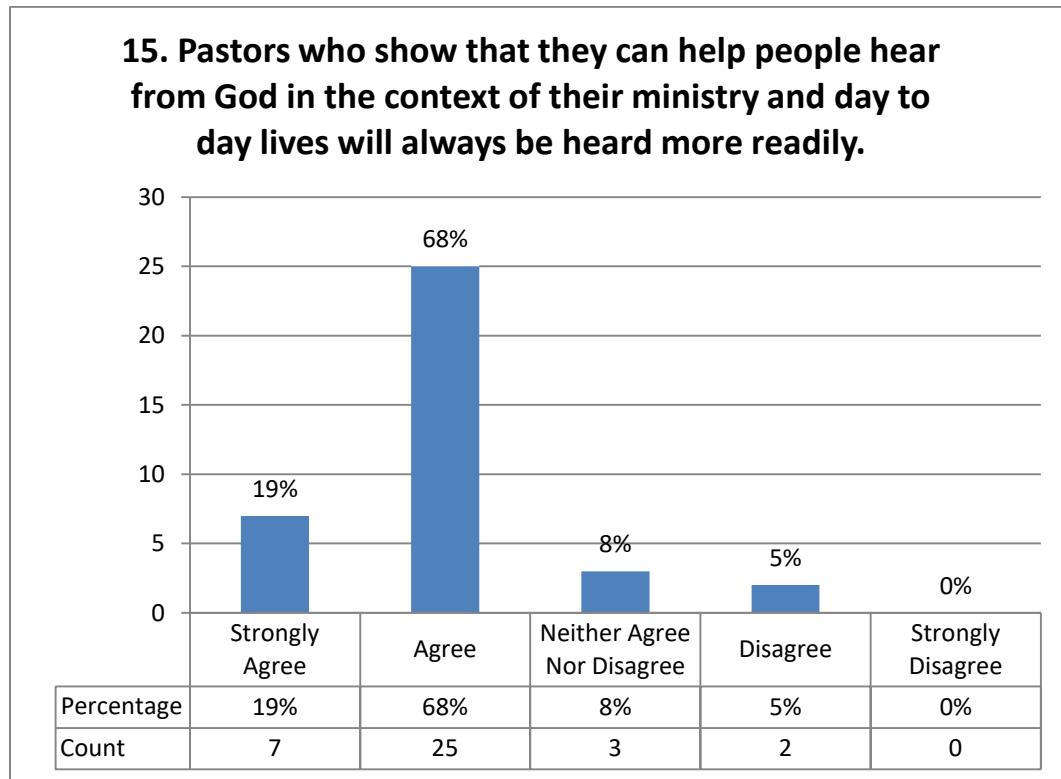
Observation: My theory for why a high number of people responded with “neither agree nor disagree” is that they were content with the amount of exposition done by the pastors and the amount of application left for the congregation to reflect on and think about. On the other hand, a high number of people responded disagree. Perhaps, they preferred a more expository type of preaching.

14. *A pastor who maintains eye contact will be regarded as a caring pastor.*



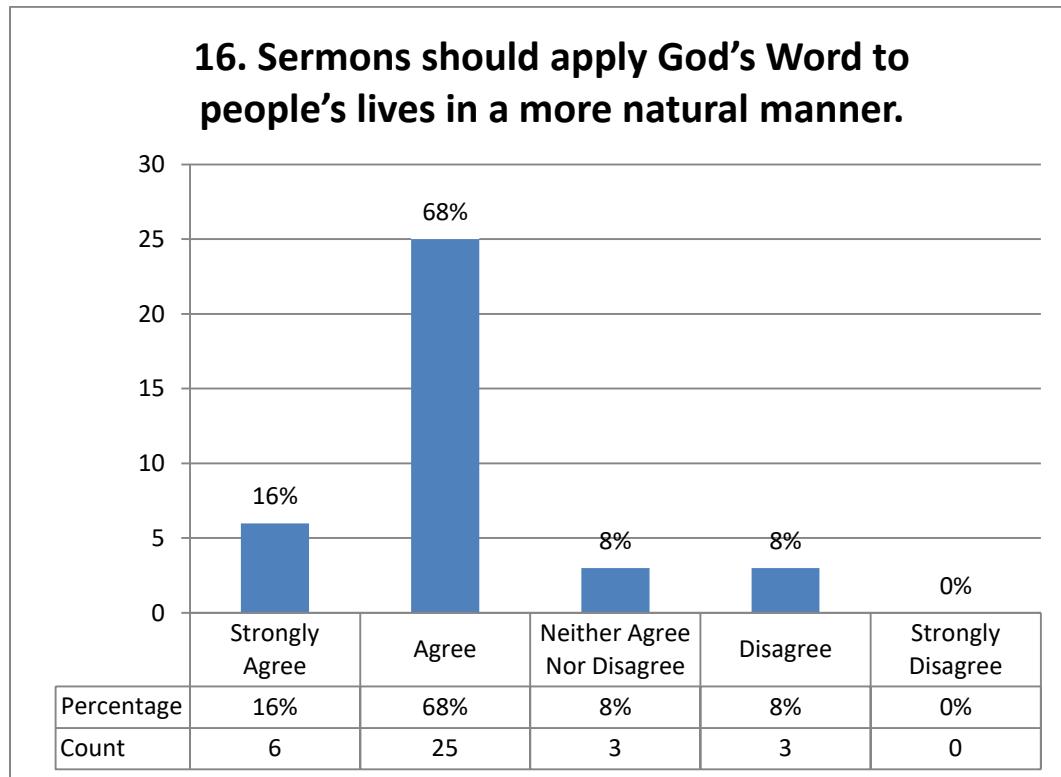
Observation: Indeed, maintaining eye contact when one preaches is important in communicating an effective and caring sermon.

15. Pastors who show that they can help people hear from God in the context of their ministry and day to day lives will always be heard more readily.



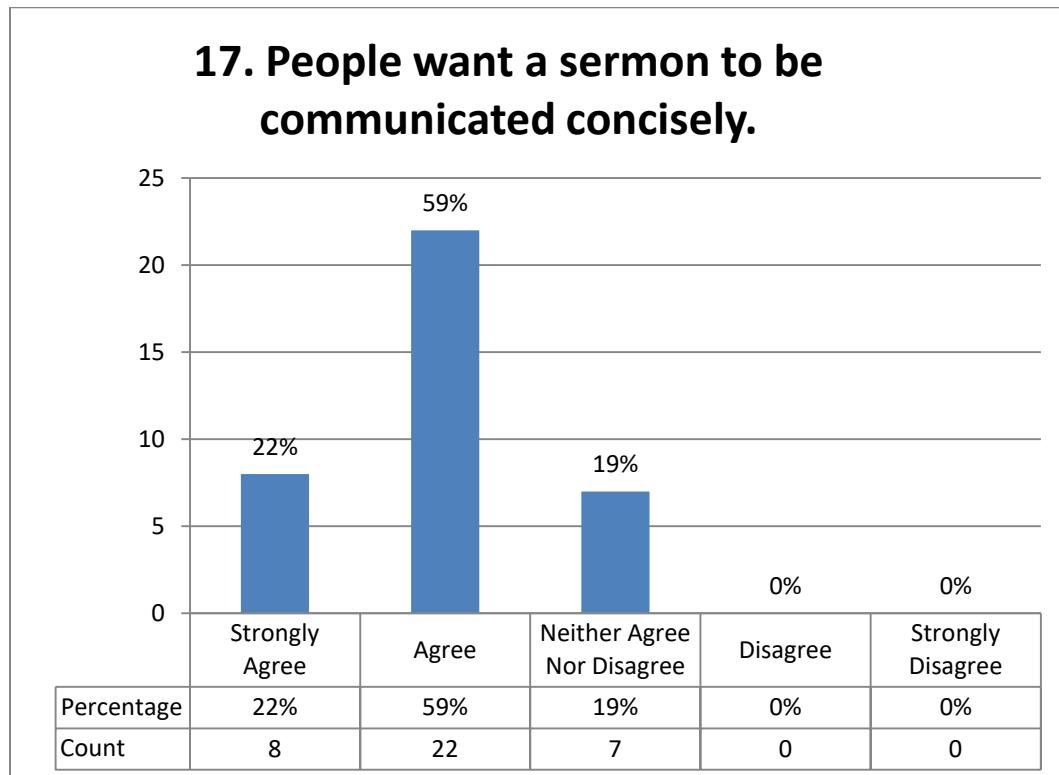
Observation: Again, the ability to connect the Word of God to the lives of the people is paramount and people like that.

16. Sermons should apply God's Word to people's lives in a more natural manner.



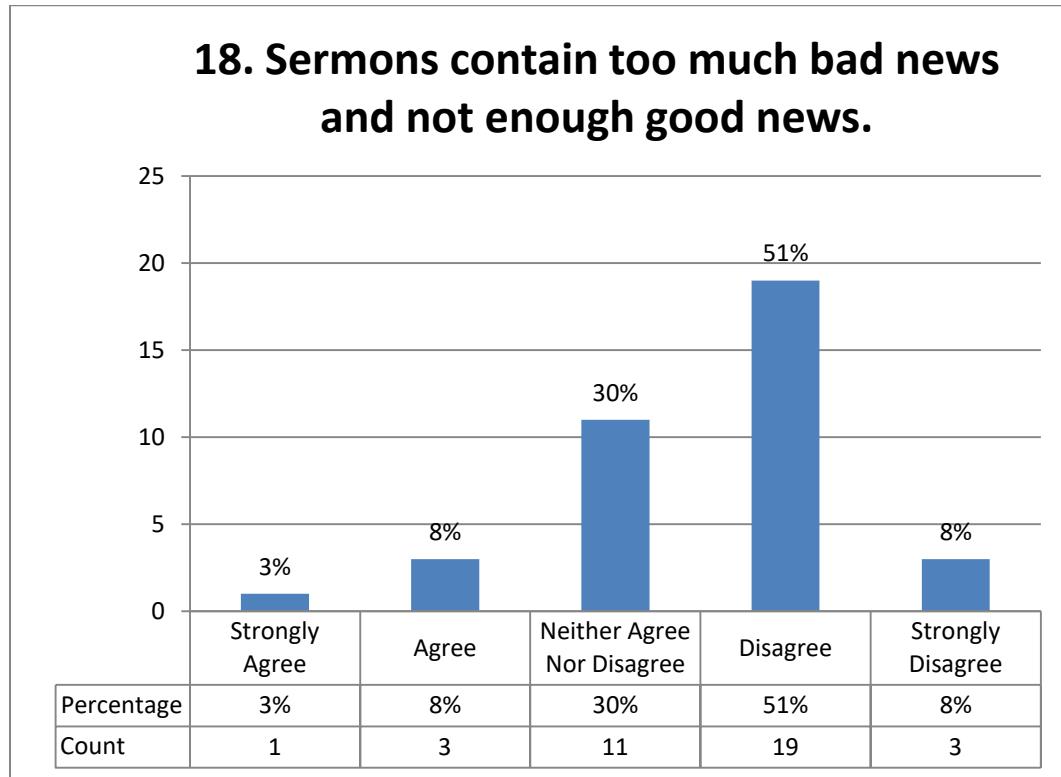
Observation: People like to hear and see that the Word of God is not something unheard or unreachable, and to have the idea of incarnation in preaching.

17. *People want a sermon to be communicated concisely.*



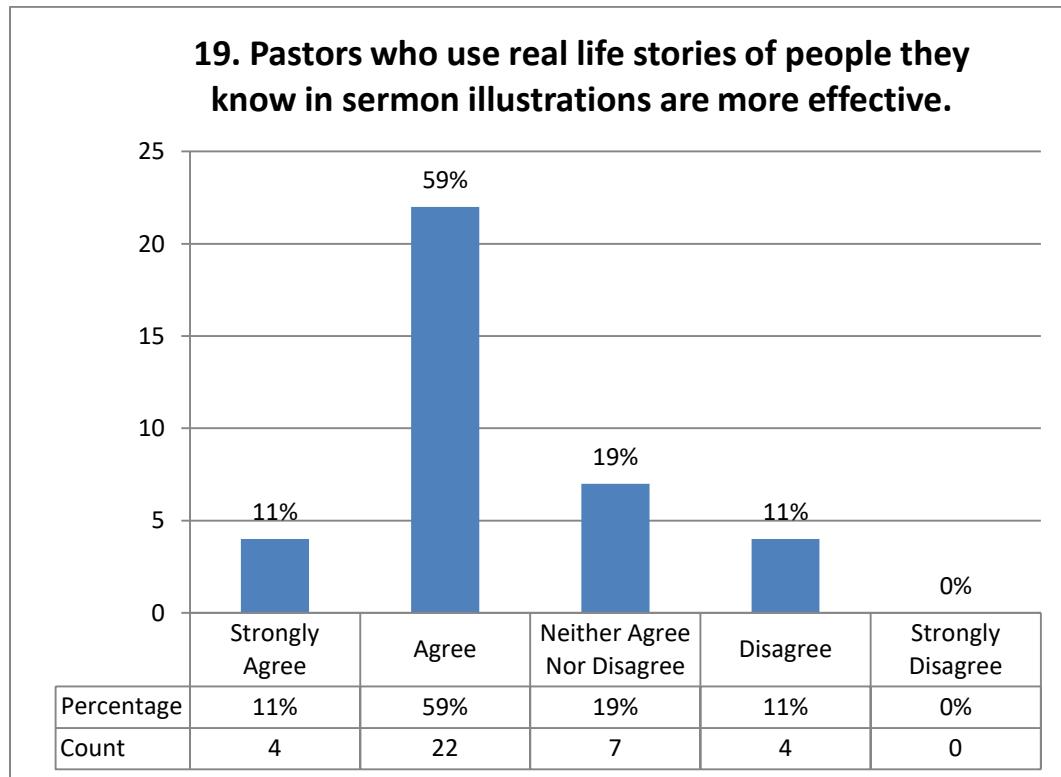
Observation: This question is a follow up question to question number 12. The results clearly show that people prefer to hear a simple and concise message. It is evident that a preacher will lose people's attention if a sermon has numerous points versus only one or two points.

18. *Sermons contain too much bad news and not enough good news.*



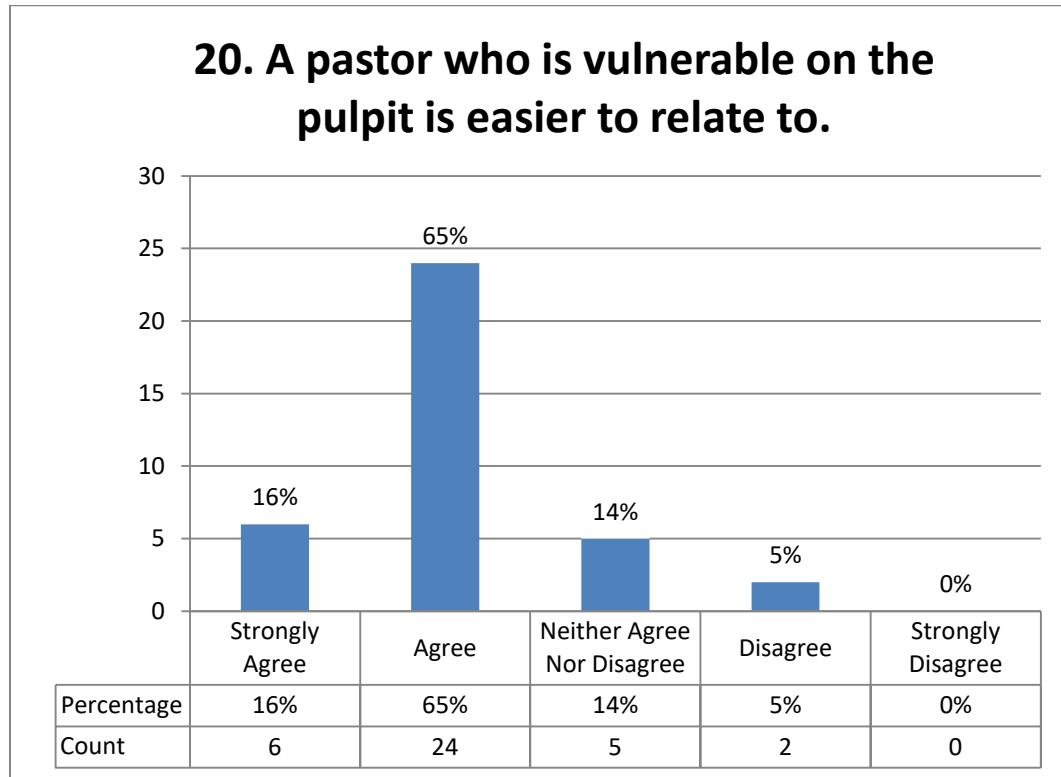
Observation: I am glad that the majority of people did not think sermons contained too much bad news.

19. Pastors who use real life stories of people they know in sermon illustrations are more effective.



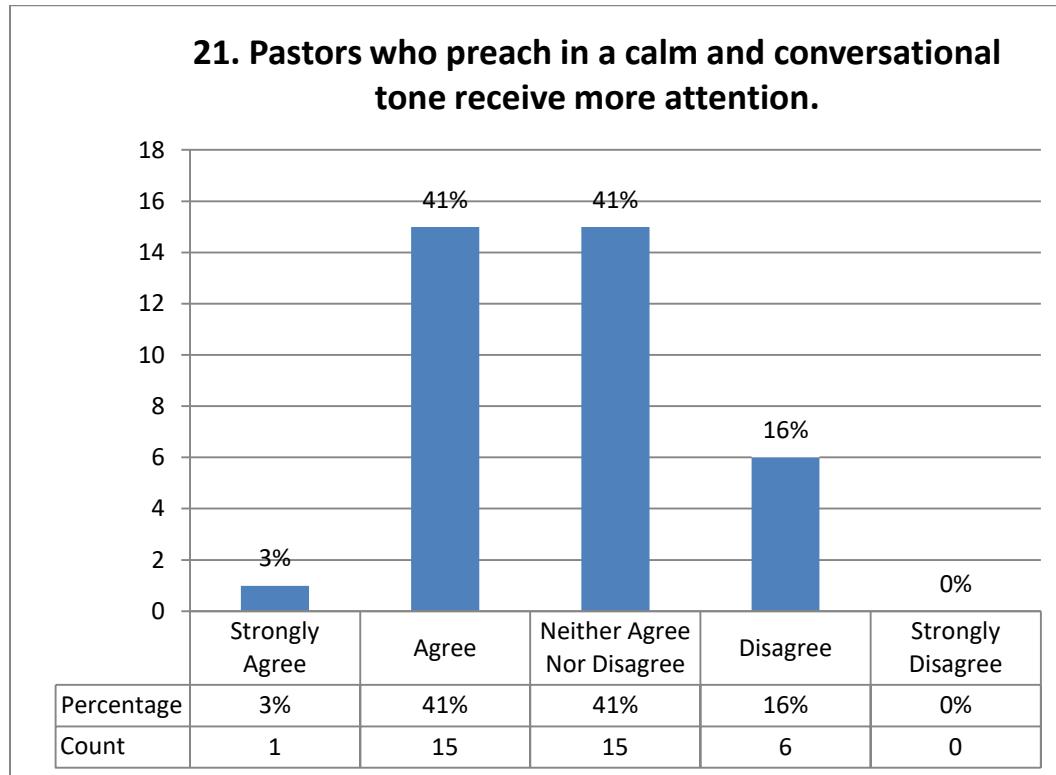
Observation: A personal story is indeed a very powerful illustration to bring a point across in a sermon.

20. *A pastor who is vulnerable on the pulpit is easier to relate to.*



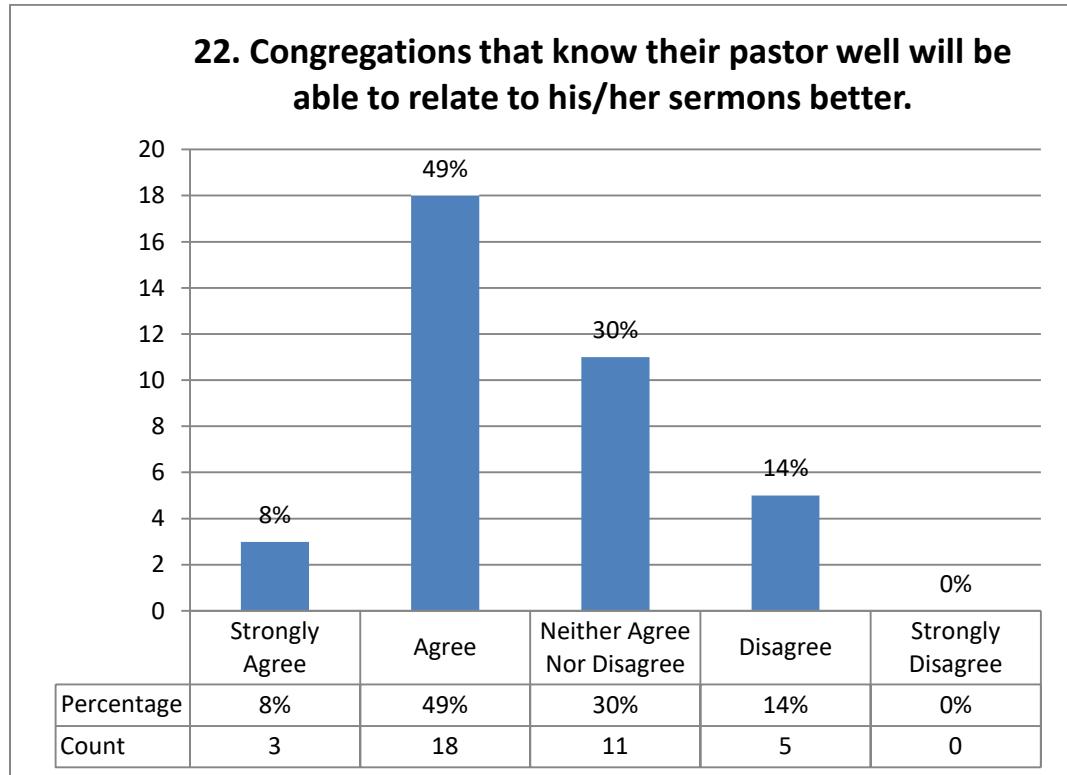
Observation: I suspect that people would like to see authenticity in the pastor in living out biblical truth.

21. *Pastors who preach in a calm and conversational tone receive more attention.*



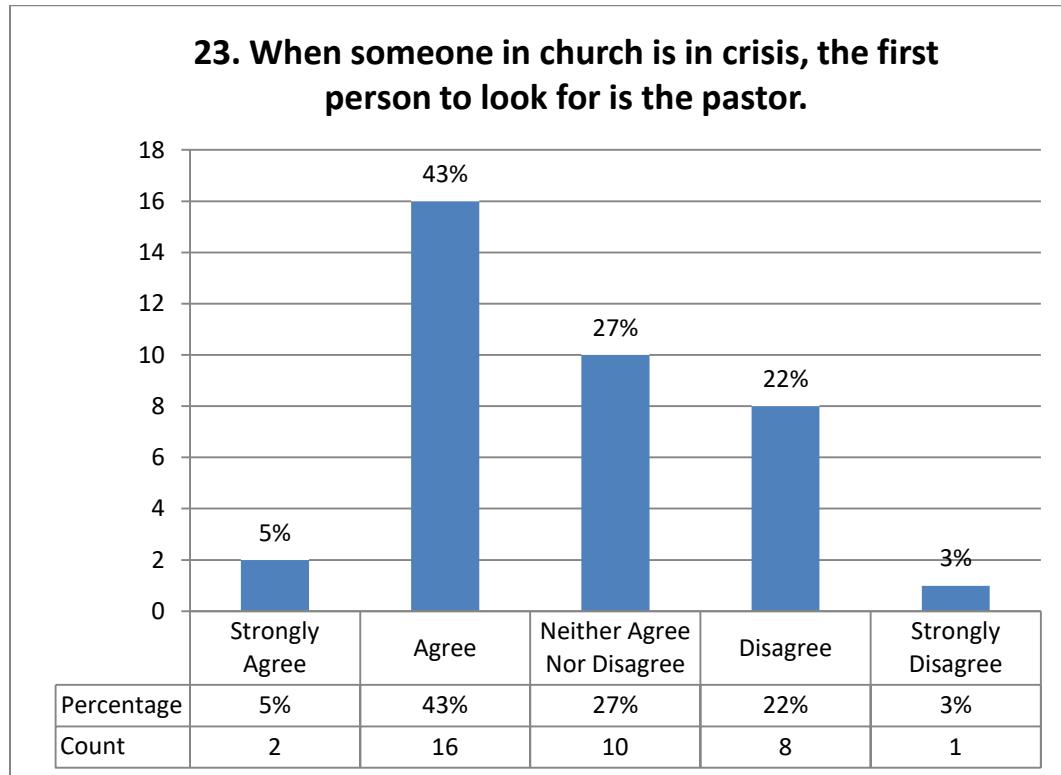
Observation: There was not an overwhelming agreement in the responses for this question. Those who were in agreement (the combination of “Strongly Agree” and “Agree”) was 44% which was only slightly higher than those who “Neither Agree Nor Disagree” at 41%. My assumption is that people are not concerned with how the tone of the sermon is preached as long as it is being preached well and there are some things they can learn from it.

22. Congregations that know their pastor well will be able to relate to his/her sermons better.



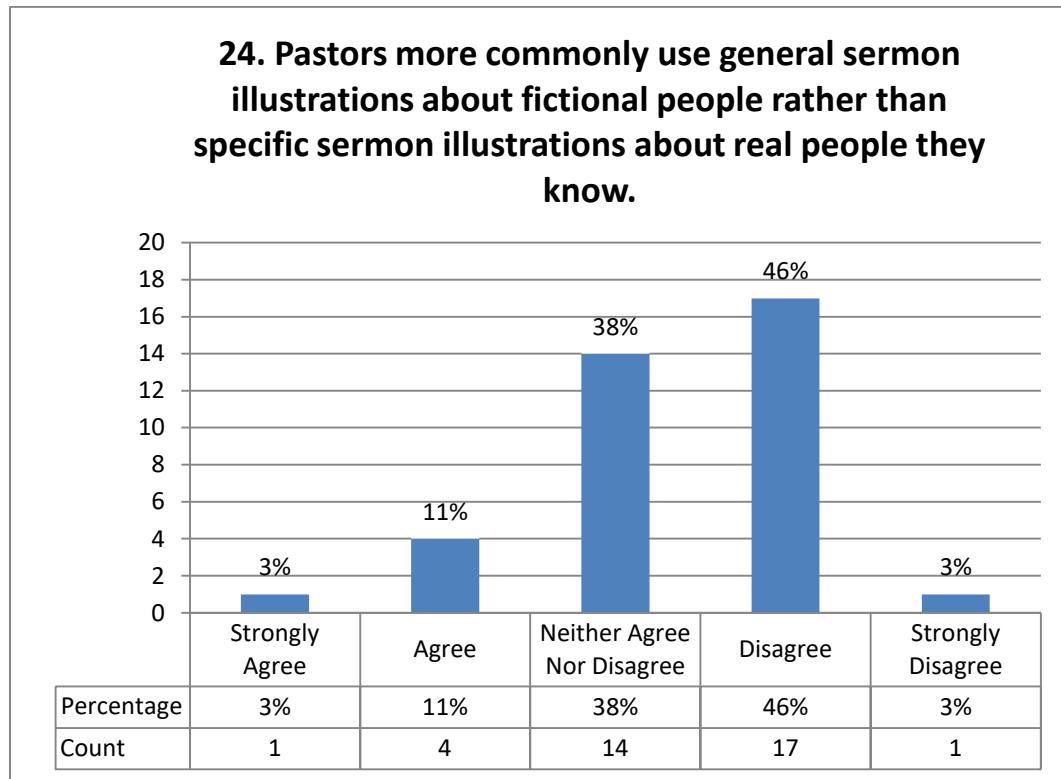
Observation: I was surprised with the responses. I thought the results would be overwhelmingly in agreement. My theory is that some people do not mind not knowing his/her pastors as long as the pastor delivers the sermon well.

23. When someone in church is in crisis, the first person to look for is the pastor.



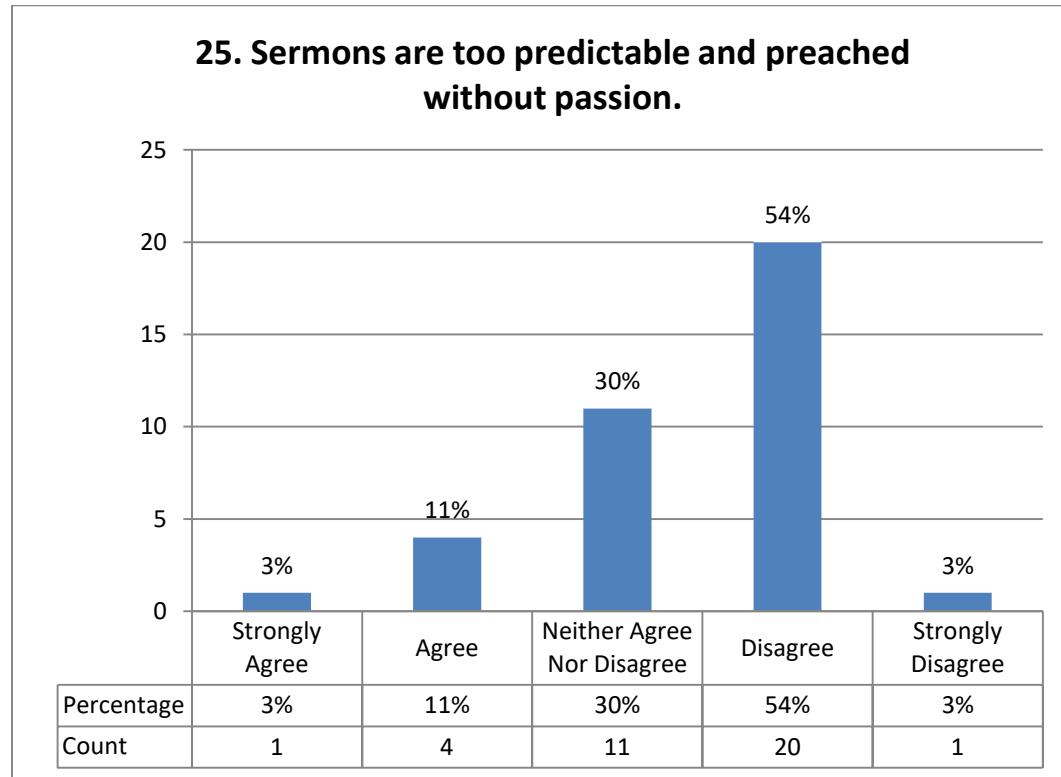
Observation: I wonder if those who are in disagreement have a strong lay-ministry of care or if they do not want to burden their pastors. Also, do they have a strong understanding of crisis ministry?

24. Pastors more commonly use general sermon illustrations about fictional people rather than specific sermon illustrations about real people they know.



Observation: For those who were in disagreement, I wonder is it because their pastors often used real life experiences in the church as illustrations?

25. *Sermons are too predictable and preached without passion.*



Observation: I am glad that the majority disagreed with this statement. However, for those who agreed, were they bored and not mentally or spiritual challenged?

Semi-Structured Interview Findings

In the second survey group, there were six participants and each of them was given eight questions to answer. This inquiry was conducted in a semi-structured interview format. The members of this group consisted of pastors who preached regularly. The purpose of these interviews was to gain a deeper understanding of whether preaching can practically be used as a form of pastoral care from the perspective of those who have been preaching for a while.

Question 1: When you stand up to preach, what do you hope will happen to your congregation as a result of listening to your sermon? Tell me what preaching does for your congregation that cannot be easily replaced?

The topic of transformation came up almost unanimously. The idea of listening through the Holy Spirit and receiving personal encounters was the general consensus. Some did add that the idea of listening as a community was an important exercise for the church to gather on a Sunday morning. The result of the second part of the question is also unanimous. Everyone agreed that listening to a sermon as a church allowed God to speak to the community as a whole. To elaborate, one of them suggested as an example the difference between a bible study and a sermon. In a bible study, one can hear a person's perspective, but in a sermon, one is hearing God's word in his or her life.

Question 2: What are the purposes of preaching?

The majority answered proclamation. It is the time of correction, encouragement, inspiration and expectation. Some added that it is to challenge people, especially when God is not seemingly present in the circumstances. Teaching was another theme that was

mentioned where new insight can be gained as well as new light and intellectual alignment.

Question 3: Do you think preaching with the knowledge of what your congregation is going through important? If yes, why? If not, why not?

The question here generated both a yes and no answer. Yes because it helps to be sensitive to people's needs and it is always a great asset to preach in a context that people are familiar with. No because God can triumph over all of this.

Question 4: What do you think of the use of guest preachers? Do you think guest preachers are effective? What are some things a guest preacher can say or do that you as a preaching pastor cannot do?

The answers here are a bit more polarised. Some think that the use of guest preachers are great as guest preachers can bring a different perspective and different style of preaching. However, some think guest preachers should not be used often as it can lead to abuse from over reliance. It may be effective in the short term, but it may not in the long term because of lack of relationship and understanding.

Question 5: Do you think there is a correlation between preaching and pastoral care? Please elaborate on your answer.

The consensus to this question is a resounding yes! A person can only listen to and accept the counsel of a person whom he or she can trust. A person can trust the image of the person standing behind a pulpit but that trust is a superficial trust, not a deep trust. Care from the pulpit is an aspect of pastoral care. It sets the tone for the congregation to care.

Question 6: When you prepare a sermon, is there a certain group of people or certain individuals in your congregation that you are mindful of? And if so, does that influence the way you prepare your sermons?

The response was yes. The second part of the answer was also yes but it only affected the presentation, not the exegetical process. Pastors usually have different diverse groups in mind when preparing a sermon. For example, some groups include the young, singles, women, single parents, the elderly and families. Also, there are those who struggle with illnesses like depression, cancer, or even loneliness.

Question 7: If there is a crisis in your congregation, do you adapt your sermons to the circumstances or do you continue to preach as you have prepared for?

Surprisingly the majority of the answers are “yes and no.” The majority agree that they will address the crisis, but not necessarily change the sermon. Some suggested they might use a different application, but not change the text. The most poignant question that was asked by one of the interviewees was, “Am I prepared to do a last minute change – mentally and spiritually?” If he were, he would go as far as acknowledging the crisis, but not necessarily change the sermon.

Question 8: What kind of feedback have you received from your congregation about your preaching? Can you give some specific examples?

The majority agree that genuine feedback is hard to come by. Most people give surface comments like “good job” or “good sermon.” Members of the congregation do not want to give or do not know how to give constructive feedback and criticism for sermons. All the interviewees would like to receive more meaningful feedback. For

example, someone might say “I want to know more about what you said” or “I want to reflect more on something you said,” or “The message spoke to me because ….”

Evaluation of the Survey Results

When the written survey was sent out, I was apprehensive as to how many people would respond and concerned about when I would receive the results back. It took considerable time to meet and talk with people to help me fill out the survey. It required a lot of reminders in order to get results back from people. However, the encouraging finding from this was that as I conversed with people about the thesis title, many were interested and saw the relevancy of exploring this topic. They became willing participants not only to fill out the survey questions, but also engaged in exploring how we can make this known to others.

In retrospect, I wish I could have done the survey a little differently. The written survey was completed anonymously. There was no indication as to whether the response was from a pastor or from a congregational member. Looking back, I would have included a question asking whether the respondent was a pastor or a lay person. It would have given me a better perspective on how preaching with care would affect a pastor delivering a sermon versus a congregational member listening to the sermon.

I would have also broadened the circle of respondents to include people who attend church service regularly, and not necessarily serving in any leadership capacity or volunteer position. I believe it would help to gain a broader perspective of whether pastoral care is being communicated in sermons and whether pastoral care is received by the congregation.

The results from question two also indicated that the predominant age group of respondents were in their mid thirties to mid forties. The reason could be that the respondents were young, second generation Chinese Christians from my own church and also from churches of similar demographics as most of the members of the pastor's fellowship that I am a part of are comprised mostly of second generation Asian pastors.

It became obvious, after administering two surveys to a very limited number of participants that I could not speak with final authority or conclusiveness about preaching as a means to pastoral care. I could only make limited observations at best. However, there is an indication from the survey results that congregation members do want a pastor whom they can relate to and know. The conventional wisdom of "You need to know your people and they need to see you as their pastor" is not only important, but should be the foundational stone to our pastoral and preaching ministry.

Borrowing from Robert C. Anderson's exaltation, "The pastor should love his people extravagantly," and "The pastor should preach the Word faithfully."⁴ The key to understanding people's plight or their joy is to spend time with them. Pastors or preachers are not perfect people. I believe that if a pastor genuinely loves the people, it would be easier for people to forgive his inadequacies. This kind of love is surfaced in the way he demonstrates to them, evidenced in the time he spends with them, and not as a means to accomplish his own agendas. As much as God's people need a preacher, they need a pastor. And if you are going to be a pastor, you have to be a shepherd.

⁴ Robert C. Anderson, *The Effective Pastor: A Practical Guide to the Ministry* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 1985), 365.

The pulpit is not a place for personal vendetta or personal accomplishment. It is a place where the Word is spoken so people could understand it. It speaks about people's deportment and how to mature spiritually. The pastor has the duty to prepare a sermon exegetically (on the Bible text as well as on his congregation) so that people can actually understand what God is saying to them.

Conclusion

The result of the surveys indicate that for those who sit in the pews, not only do they yearn for a pastor who knows them, but also a pastor who is able to connect with them on an emotional level as well as on a spiritual level. Although such expectation is not enormously unreasonable, it speaks of the desire to be fed spiritually and also to be known. My observation then led me to see what is obvious: There is a vacuum in people's lives. People want what they do not have. They want to be known. They want to be cared for. People are constantly searching for something. Therefore the most effective way to preach is to intentionally and creatively find time to care for the people. I am convinced that the more pastors care for their congregation, the more people will see the connection between their reality and the reality of the Word.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

I believe the role of a preacher in demonstrating pastoral care in his or her preaching lies in the fact that he or she is a shepherd first, and not a preacher first. A preacher should be a pastor at heart.¹ We see that in Jesus' teachings and the apostle Peter's teachings. The confusion of these two roles lies in the fact that "pastors" are more accustomed to the work of "managing"² than the work of "shepherding." Eugene Peterson uses the imagery of "shopkeepers" in a rather sarcastic way in describing such pastors:

The pastors of America have metamorphosed into a company of shopkeepers, and the shops they keep are churches. They are preoccupied with shopkeeper's concerns - how to keep the customers happy, how to lure customers away from competitors down the street, how to package the goods so that the customers will layout more money.³

The English word "pastor" has its roots in Latin and it is rendered semantically equivalent to the biblical word for "shepherd."⁴ The very title "pastor" implies that each and every pastor is supposed to do the work of a shepherd. It should be his or her main duty. And it is primarily what he or she is called to do. When a pastor focuses on

¹ I believe the term "pastor" and "preacher" should be used interchangeably. While understandably the role of a pastor and the role of a preacher may suggest specific tasks or responsibilities, however, the primary role is to shepherd.

² Although there is nothing particularly wrong with managing, it is important to understanding what the primary role of a pastor is. It is the call to shepherd, not to manage.

³ Eugene H. Peterson, *Working the Angels: The Shape of Pastoral Integrity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), 1.

⁴ James H. Moulton and George Milligan, eds., *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1930), 524. See also Douglas Harper, "Pastor (n): Online Etymology Dictionary." (2001-2016), accessed September 5, 2016, <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=pastor>.

“running” the church instead of shepherding the flock, he or she is in danger of abandoning his or her God-given calling.

According to Glenn Wagner, pastors assuming the role of rancher or CEO instead of shepherd is the fundamental reason why today’s churches are losing influence.⁵ He thinks it is subtle heresy that could cripple the church. He calls for every pastor to return to God’s original model for pastoral ministry.

In summary, the metaphor of shepherd is used in the Bible to describe the heart of leadership. The leaders of God’s people, both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament, are said to be responsible for being shepherds of the flock entrusted to them.

Thus far, we have looked at the metaphor of the shepherd in the Old Testament and also looked at the example of the apostle Peter and Jesus, the Good Shepherd, to help us better visualize the notion of shepherd in the Bible. I believe the apostle Paul has encapsulated this idea of shepherd in a more practical manner.

Paul, the Shepherd

Paul exudes the role of a shepherd in preaching. However, it is not the recorded sermons in Acts by the gospel writer Luke that I am looking at; it is Paul’s letters to the church. Those letters can be seen as a form of preaching. However, Paul has never identified himself as a shepherd, nor has he identified himself as a pastor, nor was he known as one either. Paul had never stayed in a church he planted for a prolonged period of time as would be required of most pastors.

⁵ E. Glenn Wagner, *Escape From Church, Inc.: The Return of the Pastor-Shepherd* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999), 17-18.

However, Luke's description of Paul's leadership is primarily in the context of him as a pastor. As much as Paul's evangelistic ministry flourished, so had his pastoral ministry. In fact, Paul's apostleship had never deviated him from pastoral ministry. One example of this is found in Acts 14:21-23:

When they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God. And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

The reference of "they" in Acts here refers to Paul and Barnabas. They both returned to those cities mentioned in the passage after they had learned the churches were going through harsh persecution. There is no indication of how long both Paul and Barnabas stayed with those churches. It is indicative that they stayed significant lengths of time to solidify, strengthen, train and choose leaders in those churches.⁶ The church needed capable leaders to weather through tough times. Paul was going to teach, train and equip them. He never intended to leave them by themselves. Even when Paul was not physically with them, he maintained contact with them through letters.⁷ Paul certainly demonstrated a shepherd's heart. He took the time to prepare the churches and warn them of the hardship ahead of them. Not only did he equip them, but he also appointed capable leaders to shepherd the churches in those cities. They needed a shepherd to lead and guide them in times of trouble.

⁶ David Spell, *Peter and Paul in Acts: A Comparison of Their Ministries: A Study in New Testament Apostolic Ministry* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, Aug 1, 2006), 86.

⁷ Spell, *Peter and Paul in Acts: A Comparison of Their Ministries: A Study in New Testament Apostolic Ministry*, 86.

Another example would be in Paul's epistle to the Ephesian church. In Ephesians 4:11, he talks about various leadership gifts of the church. In this verse, the office of pastor is described as one of the gifts of the risen Christ to his church.⁸ Paul spends nearly three years of his ministry in Ephesus.⁹ But that is the longest time he spends in one place. Although it was not specifically mentioned in this letter, we know from Acts 20:28-29, Paul charges the Ephesian elders to be shepherds of the church in light of anticipated attacks of savage wolves. The shepherd heart of Paul is clearly seen in his letters. Though he never stayed for an extended period of time in a particular church, he certainly had genuine pastoral interest and concerns. Paul Beasley-Murray describes Paul as pastor:

Paul's letters are a clear testimony to his pastoral heart. Indeed his letters are a product of his pastoral care, for through them Paul exercised a pastoral role in regard to the churches which he or his converts had founded. Paul was no academic theologian, far removed from the realities of church life; rather it was his concern for the churches which proved to be the springboard from this theology. Nor was Paul a single-focus evangelist, intent only on winning people for Jesus Christ; rather it was his concern to remain in relationship with the churches he planted.¹⁰

Further observation of Paul's shepherd heart leads to the imagery of the parent-child relationship. Paul's preferred imagery is one of the parent-child bond, instead of a shepherd metaphor. For instance, Paul declared to the Corinthians: "For though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers. For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel" (1 Corinthians 4: 15). To the same people Paul said that he nurtured them with milk, not solid food (1 Corinthians 3:2). He also described himself

⁸ The Greek word for pastor is "poimen" which naturally means "shepherd." Moulton and Milligan. eds., *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament*, 524.

⁹ Acts 20:31.

¹⁰ Paul Beasley-Murray, *Paul as Pastor*. In *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, and Daniel G. Reid (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1993), 654.

as a spiritual father to such individuals as Timothy (I Timothy 1:2), Titus (Titus 1:4), and Onesimus (Philemon 10). Although Paul may have been seen as someone who was extremely busy, he never shied away from providing care for people he had nurtured under him. We can see Paul's shepherd heart beautifully in 1 Thessalonians 2:7-8: "But we were gentle among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children. So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us."

Here Paul contrasted his shepherding role or pastoral care role to that of a nursing mother.¹¹ The words are filled with tenderness, care and love. Paul deeply cared for and genuinely loved his people. His affection for them was so great that he was willing to lay down his life (2 Corinthians 12:15), which I believe, was modeled after the Good Shepherd, Jesus.

Not only did Paul use maternal imagery to render such a shepherding heart, he also used paternal imagery to further enhance the importance of the shepherding role in preaching. Again in his letter to the Thessalonians, in 1 Thessalonians 2:11-12, "For you know how, like a father with his children, we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory."

This time both his affection and his authority are conveyed through the imagery. However, as D. Michael Martin points out, the emphasis in the Greek implicit in the

¹¹ The word that ESV renders as mother really means "nurse." However, the reflexive pronoun suggests that the image is that of a nurse caring not for someone else's children, but for her own. See, David J. Williams, *I and 2 Thessalonians: New International Commentary* (Peabody, MS: Hendrickson, 1992), 41.

phrases “each of you” and “his children” strengthens the impression of personal and individual concern.¹² The predominant mood is that of encouragement. Paul, like a father with his children, urged, encouraged, and pleaded with the Thessalonians to lead a life worthy of God.

Paul’s ministry evidently highlights his role as a shepherd in all the churches he started. Paul may not have physically preached in those churches on a consistent basis, but his pastoral letters to them were a form of preaching to those churches. We can certainly see how much Paul knew them and how he was able to “preach” in their context, and certainly see how much Paul loved and cared for them. Paul was like a spiritual father to these groups of churches. They naturally looked up to Paul as such because Paul evangelised to them and brought about their conversion. Paul then taught, discipled, trained and equipped them as leaders. Paul was very much a shepherd whom these churches looked up to. Paul unquestionably had a shepherd’s heart. People mattered to Paul. Each individual was important. Hence in Romans 16, Paul takes the trouble of greeting over twenty-seven people by name. Like a shepherd who pays close attention to each sheep, Paul concerned himself with his followers on an individual basis. Paul saw himself as a shepherd of God’s flock that had been purchased by the blood of Christ.

¹² D. Michael Martin, *I, 2 Thessalonians*, The New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1995), 84.

Why Preaching as a Means of Pastoral Care is Important

When I first began my ministry, I was keenly aware of how preaching and pastoral care were closely related. Over the years, I have become more convinced of the strong correlation between preaching and pastoral care. Today, I believe whole heartedly that preaching depends on pastoral care to make sermons relevant and transformational. I have learned that I cannot separate my pastoral responsibilities like visitations, counselling, visioning, discipling or even administration from preaching. If I did, I would feel disconnected with the concerns that the members of my congregation brought with them to the sanctuary on Sunday mornings. Pastoral care has helped my preaching. It compels me to reflect theologically and deeply on things my church members are facing.

I also find that when pastoral care increases – trust, forgiveness, love and grace abounds in the church. When I make a mistake in my sermon or when I speak on a controversial topic or when there is something that people do not agree with in my sermon, more often than not, I am given the benefit of the doubt. Philip Wogaman puts it well: “Let me state the principle in an academic way. A C-plus sermon will be perceived as B-plus or A-minus if the preacher is viewed as a friend; an A-plus sermon will be demoted to a B or lower if the preacher comes across as uncaring.”¹³

I have observed that even in this technology-savvy generation where the most preferred form of communication is through Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, or emails, still nothing comes close to real human contact. There is something enigmatic and spiritual when there is face-to-face or eye-to-eye contact in conversations that modern technology

¹³ J. Philip Wogaman, *Speaking Truth in Love: Prophetic Preaching to a Broken World* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, September 1, 1998), 20.

cannot mimic. In fact, I believe having real face-to-face conversations will even increase in this screen-overloaded generation.

Another reason why I think preaching and pastoral care are intensely related is because sermons should be a conversation starter. They should not be the end of the conversation. A sermon that speaks to the people should generate dialogue among the people. It should get people talking at meal times, outside and away from Sunday morning service. They know what you are talking about and it grabs hold of them. They sense that the sermon was speaking to them. They are aware that you are thinking about them. The sermon transforms them and not just merely informs them. They want the conversation to continue outside of the church. When that happens, it has become a way of proclaiming the Gospel and we get the whole church proclaiming the Good News, and not just the preachers.

Practical Suggestions for Preaching as a Means of Pastoral Care

1. Show Care in Your Communication

How a preacher communicates is rather important in showing care to the congregation. Some may think whether a preacher cares or not is a non-issue when it comes to how a sermon is prepared or delivered. On the contrary, how a sermon is preached and communicated conveys care on the deepest level, as indicated in the survey results in Chapter Four. A hearer would be able to detect whether a sermon is prepared with a local context and concern, as opposed to it being put together with a few lines from biblical commentaries. A preacher who cares will cause others in the congregation

to care as well. G. Lee Ramsey puts it this way, “When it comes to care, the language of sermon tells the whole story. If preachers want to help create caring congregations, they will care with the words they use in the pulpit. Our preaching language shapes and forms our congregational worlds.”¹⁴

Not only are the preacher’s verbal words important, but the preacher’s non-verbal communication is equally or more important. Non-verbal communication is vital to convey how much a preacher knows the congregation as well as how much a preacher knows the Bible. Non-verbal communication is comprised of tone of voice, expression, gestures and even the way a preacher stands. As mentioned in the first chapter, the differences between the approach of the neonatologist and the first- year resident doctor were in the way the neonatologist communicated verbally and non-verbally that helped my wife and me to understand our predicament better. Preaching is much more than just words. The verbal message is accompanied by nonverbal messages that signal a preacher’s attitude, personality, character, background, relationship with the congregation audience and even familiarity with the preaching text. The non-verbal message is particularly crucial when a preacher wants to convey pastoral care in preaching.

Keeping constant eye contact with the hearer is perhaps the most impactful non-verbal communication. It establishes rapport, expresses emotion, checks on the hearer’s reactions, and keeps them interested.

Non-verbal communication not only involves body language, but it also includes how a preacher uses his or her voice. It is not only what one says, but the way one says it

¹⁴ G. Lee Ramsey, Jr. *Care-full Preaching: From Sermon to Caring Community* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2000), 65.

that is important. How a preacher speaks can be a major factor in whether people want to listen to the preacher and whether they are able to receive pastoral care from the pulpit.

2. Feedback and Evaluation

Feedback and evaluation are crucial. Sermons are primarily written for the ears, especially when a preacher wants to communicate care in the sermons. Craig Loscalzo explains feedback and evaluation as, “It is an intentional attempt to gain an understanding of how our congregation hears us as we preach.”¹⁵ When feedback and evaluation is done right and received positively, it can help preachers to learn how his or her preaching is being heard. It provides a framework for understanding the theological and practical depth of the congregation. It improves the way sermons are prepared. It promotes relevancy in sermons. It makes pastors better preachers.

Some Practical Ways To Develop Feedback And Evaluation Processes

i. From time to time, ask specific questions to some congregational members. Some examples of questions may include:

- How did the sermon speak to you today?
- Did the sermon hold your attention throughout?
- Did you learn something new after listening to the sermon?

ii. Put together a group from your leadership team of staff members and lay leaders that you know would want the best for you and would give you honest, constructive feedback and evaluation. By giving someone a special feedback sheet with certain

¹⁵ Craig A. Loscalzo, *Best Advice For Preaching*, ed. John S. McQuire (Augsburg Fortress, 1998), 141.

questions, you can get feedback right away. I find that people are often honored to help their pastors craft a better message.

The importance of feedback can be seen in Haddon Robinson's quips, "However it comes about, feedback is the lifeblood of communication. Without it, preaching seldom touches life."¹⁶

3. Take the Effort to Go to the People

In order to communicate care to the congregation, preachers must take the extra step to go to his or her congregational members' homes, offices or even to the park. By stepping out from our space into the space of members, preachers will be able to understand the dynamics, the sights and even the smells of the habitat that church members are deeply entrenched in each day of their lives. Listening to the voices of those around them, understanding the space they are in, enjoying the world God created with others and spending time with them outside of the office gives preachers more sermon material than staying in the office.

I find that attending small groups or being in a small group is an excellent way to not only know how much people get out of our sermons, but also a place that is teeming with note-worthy sermon material.

4. Invite People to Your Home

There is a strong indication in the survey questions in the previous chapter that people would like their pastors to be involved in the lives of the people. One of the

¹⁶ Haddon Robinson, "Listening To The Listeners: He who hath ears to hear gives better sermons," Leadership (Spring 1983): 68-71, accessed December 10, 2016, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/pastors/1983/spring/83l2068.html>.

easiest ways to reach out to others is by inviting others into your home. It is also one of the most effective ways to reach out to others. Nothing communicates care better than inviting people from your church for an afternoon tea or for a meal. The home environment creates a homey-feel for people to be more at ease than in a church environment. It means you are welcoming them into your family. Laughter, tears, sorrow and hope can be shared easily. Through opening our homes, we open our hearts and display the warmth of our love and care. Inviting people into your home is a blessing that flows in both directions — to your guests and back again to you.

5. Invest in People

Simply put, without people, church does not exist. To recognise the importance of people is one thing, but to do something for them is another. No preacher would deny the fact that people are valuable, as shown in the survey, but yet in reality a lot of people are neglected. They easily fall through the cracks. When they are not in our sight, they are effortlessly out of our minds too. Pastors need to invest their time, energy, and money in developing their contact with people. Pastors can go out to people and ask others what they think of a sermon topic he or she is working on, and get to know them. Nurturing relationship with people in our church community is helpful in all kinds of ways. It helps us as preachers to get a different perspective about how people perceive church. It may sound trite, but people don't care how much you know until they know how much you care.

6. Enhance your Understanding of your Own Church Culture

In order to work effectively in a church community, either in a diverse, ethnic or homogenous community, a pastor needs to understand how each community is organized in order to support its members. It is not uncommon to hear a pastor say, “I was not able to engage with the people in this city or town because I do not understand them.” Each community, either diverse or homogenous, already has some sort of organized composition in place. They have their own network of relationships that they tap into for mutual support. There is a history of events, relationships, connections and social activities that define and shape the church. These may or may not be visibly apparent to a new person. Once a pastor understands the social organization of the group, it will become easier to identify the most appropriate leaders, help build bridges, and work across multiple groups in a diverse community.

I have observed that a lot of pastors invest heavily on Bible exposition courses with the desire to dig deeper into the Bible, but the desire to know his or her own church culture is lacking. The zeal to be biblically correct cannot supersede the zeal to be culturally correct. I believe they are equally important. As Leith Anderson states, “They have done well on revelation (the Bible) but poorly on relevance (the culture).”¹⁷ Sometimes sermons are ineffective not because they are unbiblical, but because they are irrelevant. It is not sufficient to be only biblically astute, but also culturally astute.

Pastors need to study the culture. Without truly understanding the customs, sentiments, and thought patterns of their church members, it will only be a futile

¹⁷ Leith Anderson, *Dying For Change* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 1990), 17.

endeavour. A pastor can have the right meaning of a text, correct theology, good ideas from a passage, and yet that may not matter. You cannot communicate to a community that you have not studied or experienced.

Pastors need to be aware of what is going on in the world today. Keeping abreast of the news of today will not only help you understand some of the challenges your congregation might face, but also lets them know that you care about what is going on in the world today. This is no longer an academic exercise, but it is a widespread social phenomena. It impacts our literature, our dress, our art, our architecture, our music, our sense of morality, our self-identity, and our Christian ministry. People need to know what their pastors think of current events, celebratory or controversial or full of calamity, and how they should react as a church.

For an example of the importance of cultural understanding – take the instance of well known preachers of the past centuries, namely Charles Spurgeon, John Wesley, Jonathan Edwards and many more. These preachers formed and shaped the way of life and the way people lived their Christian life with their well-crafted and well-delivered sermons. Those sermons were outstanding sermons. They were theologically robust. However, would any of them still be preach-able today? In my opinion, I do not think they would be preach-able today. They may be a good resource, or appeal to a certain group of people but the language and ways of thinking are distinct from today's listeners. It is not that they are not worth reading. Those sermons are immensely rich in theology, deeply thought through, and we all can benefit from reading or listening to them, but they would not capture the attention of a congregation today.

7. Get Involved in a Pastors' Fellowship

While there are many benefits for a pastor to be involved in a pastor's support group or fellowship in their area of ministry, it is also particularly important for understanding the culture in the city or the surrounding areas. It helps to develop an understanding of what is going on in the area and to be contextually sensitive to it. You may be surprised to find that your own church's crisis may not be as peculiar as you would think. Or you may find your church is not that different from another church. We can learn from other pastors who have been in the same area of ministry for an extended period of time. They may have thought through and reflected upon these issues deeply and for longer than you have. It can provide pastors with useful information and resources for effective ministry. It can also provide a place for mentoring. Pastors need other pastors to survive.

8. Maintain Balance

Lastly, maintaining balance is paramount in church ministry. Understandably, preaching with pastoral care is hard work and it takes an enormous amount of time to be able to prepare a care-full sermon. To learn to care for others, we must first learn to care for ourselves. We need to learn to say "no" and be comfortable with the answer. No one is able to say "yes" to everything. For every "yes" we commit to, there is a "no" to someone or something that we will neglect. It might be at the expense of our family time, time with our spouse, prayer time, study time, rest, sleep and the list goes on. We need to keep balance between our families and our calling as a shepherd. Leaning towards an extreme will derail any form and shape of effective ministry. To grow a healthy preaching ministry, preachers must be able to balance every area of life.

How Do We Maintain Balance In Ministry?

i. Know Who You Are

Without true knowledge of self, there will be no real growth. Preachers need to understand their own prejudices and preferences. They need to evaluate their strengths and weaknesses as a preacher. At any rate, preachers need to honestly examine their heart's disposition, their makeup, their strengths and weaknesses, their preferences and prejudices, and their unhealed hurt.

ii. Work on your Weaknesses

No one is perfect. No one can be good at everything. Preachers are no exception. Not every preacher is a people-person. Some love the company of people and it drives their passion for ministry. Some do not perform well in spending prolonged periods of time with people. Know your limits. Know when to retreat to a quieter place to regain focus and energy.

iii. Build a Leadership Team

No matter how hard we try, we cannot achieve perfect balance. No preacher can do equally well in every area of his or her preaching ministry. Certainly, no preacher can know every single person that walks into the church, especially given a large sized church. There is a limit on how many people we can truly give care to. So a helpful preaching ministry is to build a caring team among the members or build a leadership team. If a pastor can add other leaders or members who have complementary gifts, skills,

and abilities to his or her leadership team, then he or she will be able to balance his or her ministry, not only in preaching, but also ministry as a whole.

Summary and Conclusion

The call to preach is indeed a call that cannot be taken lightly. It requires a relentless commitment to improve ourselves and to constantly evaluate our own growth in preaching. Darrell Johnson puts it this way, “The call to preach is a call to live a different kind of life.”¹⁸ It is a call to embrace this call and to intentionally make a conscious decision to make a difference in our preaching. A sermon that participates in the reality of people’s lives, like the transformational exaltations of Ezekiel in Ezekiel 37, of Paul in all his letters, of Peter in his epistles, of Jesus in all his teachings, and of all the distinguished preachers before us, is a sermon that makes listeners grow in their faith journey. This thesis-project demonstrates that one of the better ways to be engaged in the lives of the people is to care for them. Preaching can be a means of pastoral care because it meets people in their circumstances of life, joys and tragedies. It is not a distant thought to think preaching can protect, nourish and comfort people. God has mandated us, preachers, to be shepherds of His flocks. A shepherd will protect the sheep from danger. This is the essential part of pastoral care in preaching. Through preaching, the pastor can show care by warning people of dangerous teachings and ways of thinking and living that are contrary to the Bible. When great expositions together with care are present in a sermon, it will benefit the people and they will be nourished by God’s Word, bringing them the comfort of the love of God.

¹⁸ Johnson, *The Glory of Preaching*, 191.

Before leaving this chapter, however, one thing must be stressed. Whatever a preacher chooses to do to develop his or her preaching proficiency, he or she should not neglect prayer. Prayer is a powerful instrument of God for our transformation. Anyone who desires to be a better preacher must take heed to the following words of Richard Forster: “To pray is to change. Prayer is the central avenue God uses to transform us. If we are unwilling to change, we will abandon prayer as a noticeable characteristic of our lives. The closer we come to the heartbeat of God, the more we see our need and the more we desire to be conformed to Christ.”¹⁹

¹⁹ Richard J. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth* (New York: Harper Collins, 1998), 33.

APPENDIX

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES

1. *When you stand up to preach, what do you hope will happen to your congregation as a result of listening to your sermon? Tell me what preaching does for your congregation that cannot be easily replaced?*

Responses:

- i. My hope is that the congregation will be touched in some way by the Holy Spirit.
- ii. How the Holy Spirit touches an individual would be a unique and personal experience, but some examples could be as follows: deeper reflection upon one's own life, curiosity to investigate a new Biblical concept that was raised during the sermon either through self-induced bible reading or asking questions of others, a personal conviction to make a change in one's behaviour, a sense of encouragement after leaving the worship service, etc.
- iii. Preaching is an absolutely necessary instrument for the congregation, because it provides a regular and focused time of biblical study/application/teaching each week, for both believers and non-believers. It must be assumed that not every member of the congregation has the time or maturity to understand the need for daily biblical study, and so the weekly Sermon provides this regular and predictable period of Biblical Teaching.

iv. I hope that the Word of God will be explicated clearly and accurately. I hope that it will touch people's lives and that there will be a transformation in their hearts.

v. Preaching is a proclamation of God's Words to a specific people of God at a particular time. The Holy Spirit helps the preacher to deliver a message to His people.

2. *What are the purposes of preaching?*

Responses:

i. The purpose of preaching is to communicate the Word of God to the congregation in such a manner that it allows the Holy Spirit to have an impact on the heart and mind of the individual congregation member.

ii. The purpose is to provide a predictable and repeatable period of time for an individual to receive consistent Biblical teaching and application on a weekly basis.

iii. To Proclaim God's Words.

3. *Do you think preaching with the knowledge of what your congregation is going through important? If yes, why? If not, why not?*

Responses:

i. Yes I believe some knowledge of what the congregation is going through is important in preaching.

ii. I would clarify that my definition of the term “knowledge” would be more focused around the makeup of the congregation and how readily the general congregation is capable of understanding and absorbing new information, as opposed to specific subjects such as one individual having cancer or going through a divorce etc.

iii. The concepts behind biblical teaching are timeless.

iv. Expressing the application of these timeless biblical truths to the congregation are where congregation “knowledge” would come into play.

v. Yes. Because it is specific to a particular congregation at a particular time.

4. *What do you think of the use of guest preachers? Do you think guest preachers are effective? What are some things a guest preacher can say or do that you as a preaching pastor cannot do?*

Responses:

i. I believe guest preachers are useful and effective but only if utilized on a limited basis.

ii. Guest preachers often provide a different communication style and a different interpretation of biblical teachings which can provide a fresh perspective for a congregation to consider.

iii. A guest preacher can sometimes introduce subjects that a preaching pastor may be uncomfortable raising due to congregational sensitivities associated with the day to day interaction of the pastor and the congregational members.

iv. If guest preachers are introduced too frequently, there can be a loss of continuity in a sermon series that would be difficult to rebuild.

v. Sometimes guest preachers are effective.

vi. Guest preachers may bring perspectives that may not be considered in a particular congregation.

5. *Do you think there is a correlation between preaching and pastoral care?*

Please elaborate on your answer.

Responses:

i. Yes, I believe there is a correlation between preaching and pastoral care.

ii. Since weekly preaching provides a consistent platform for biblical teaching and life application for the congregation, it logically follows that certain individuals within the congregation who are touched by the Holy Spirit through the weekly sermons, will seek out the pastors of a church to discuss how to apply these teachings in one's life.

iii. There may also be requests for external accountability or mentoring as a result of the Holy Spirit's work in a person's life through the weekly sermons.

iv. It should be noted that this is not a certainty following each sermon, only a probable outcome over time based upon an overall holistic preaching program of the Bible.

v. The frequency of the interaction between pastoral care and the weekly preaching sermon is subject to a multitude of factors such as the subject matter of the sermon itself, the communication style of the preaching pastor, the make-up

and spiritual maturity of the congregation itself, etc. For example preaching about divorce to a congregation of young single congregation members, or senior congregation members may not effectively translate into a heavy dose of pastoral care following the sermon.

vi. Yes. Preaching is more effective if the pastor cares about the congregation. He will understand the needs of the congregation better and the congregation will be more receptive to the message.

6. *When you prepare a sermon, is there a certain group of people or certain individuals in your congregation that you are mindful of? And if so, does that influence the way you prepare your sermons?*

Responses:

i. Yes. My specific preaching style takes into consideration that the congregation is composed of a variety of individuals who are both believers and non-believers.

ii. Biblical truth must be communicated in a manner that the broadest range of individuals within a congregation can comprehend and personalize. Examples or stories must be culturally relevant to the congregation at hand, which enhance the effectiveness of the core teachings from scripture. This principle was effectively modelled by Jesus himself in His own ministry, and holds true for us today.

iii. Yes. I would think of illustrations that would help the message to be easier and better understood.

7. If there is a crisis in your congregation, do you adapt your sermons to the circumstances or do you continue to preach as you have prepared for?

Responses:

- i. Yes but only in a partial sense. Biblical instruction from the pulpit must be culturally impactful. However, I would not conduct a complete rewrite of a sermon specifically to address a crisis within the congregation, but I would bring in examples or modify certain elements whenever it is appropriate, applicable, and consistent with the overall theme of a specific sermon message.
- ii. The sermon writing process is heavily influenced by the leading of the Holy Spirit and as such, we should be mindful of God's greater plan for the spiritual shepherding of His people within a congregation.
- iii. As a lay-preacher within my own church, I do not carry the responsibility of connecting with the Holy Spirit to determine overall spiritual themes or a series that needs to be covered with a congregation. As such, my preparation portion is limited more to a "guest preacher" type of view, where I would be asked in advance to prepare a sermon on a specific subject or passage well in advance.
- iv. I would trust the Holy Spirit for guidance for that specific week, and try to be sensitive to the Spirit's leadership on how to address any urgent or unforeseen crisis situation within the congregation.
- v. I would let the Holy Spirit lead both through the preparation and the delivery process.

8. What kind of feedback have you received from your congregation about your preaching? Can you give some specific examples?

Responses:

- i. Most feedback has been very positive.
- ii. One congregation member indicated that s/he feels that I am able to break down complex biblical teaching into pieces that are very easy to understand and apply.
- iii. One member shared that the use of visual cues, or physical examples to augment the teaching have been extremely helpful when processing the concepts presented in the core preaching material.
- iv. Someone has indicated that my physical presence and energy from the pulpit helps to maintain focus and engagement throughout the entire sermon. I do look forward to growing in my ability to teach God's Word and also to improve in areas of deficiency.
- v. Usually not specific. Observation of a change in character, spiritual maturity or fruitfulness of the congregation overtime provides the greatest feedback.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Anderson, Leith. *Dying For Change*. Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 1990.
- Anderson, Robert C. *The Effective Pastor: A Practical Guide to the Ministry*. Chicago: Moody Publishers, 1985.
- Augnet. "Works of Augustine: His Impact, Preaching." 2010. Accessed January 25, 2015. <http://augnet.org/default.asp?ipageid=393&iparentid=384>.
- Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology. "Preach, Proclaim." Walter A. Elwell, 1996. <http://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionaries/bakers-evangelical-dictionary/preach-proclaim.html> (accessed January 5, 2015).
- Bailey, Kenneth. *Poet and Peasant and Through Peasant Eyes: A Literary-Cultural Approach to the Parables in Luke Through Peasant Eyes*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm.B. Eerdman's Publishing; Combined edition, 1990.
- . *The Good Shepherd: A Thousand-Year Journey From Psalm 23 To The New Testament*. London: SPCK Publishing, Kindle, 2015.
- Barrett, C.K. *The Gospel According to St. John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text*. Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox Press, 1978.
- Beasley-Murray, Paul. *Paul as Pastor*. In *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, edited by Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, and Daniel G. Reid, 654. Downers Grove: IL, Intervarsity, 1993.
- Berlin, Adele, et al., *The Jewish Study Bible*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- Bohren, Rudolf. *Preaching and Community*. Translated by David E. Green. Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1965.
- Bradshaw, Paul F. *Two Ways of Praying*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1995.
- Clarke, James W. *Dynamic Preaching*. Westwood, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1960.
- Clark, Gordon R. *Word Hesed in the Hebrew Bible*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press Ltd., 1993.
- Clinebell, Howard. *Basic Types of Pastoral Care and Counseling*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1984.
- Chrysostom, John. *Homilies of St. John Chrysostom on the Gospel of St. Matthew*. Translated by Reverend Sir George Prevost. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956.

Day, David, Jeff Astley and Leslie J. Francis, eds. *A Reader on Preaching: Making Connections*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2005.

Avery, William O., and Gobbel, A. Roger. "The Word of God and the Words of the Preacher." In Day and Francis, 266.

Rueter, Alvin C. "Ethics in the Pulpit." In Day and Francis, 134.

Stevenson, Dwight. "Eleven Ways of Preaching a Non Sermon." In Day and Francis, 108.

Wright, N.T. foreword to "A Reader on Preaching: Making Connections." In Day and Francis, 9.

Dever, John. *Quality in Southern Baptist Pastoral Ministry: Summary and Conclusions, Phase II< Part I research*. Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY (typescript). A project funded by the Lilly Endowment, Inc.

Dever, Mark & Gilbert, Greg. *Preach: Theology Meets Practice*. Nashville, TN: B & H Books, 2012.

Fosdick, Harry Emerson. *What is the Matter with Preaching*. Harper's Monthly, no. 157 (July, 1928): 136.

Foster, Richard J. *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth*. New York: Harper Collins, 1998.

Guthrie, Donald, et al., *The New Bible Commentary Revisited*. London: Inter-Varsity Press, 1970.

Robinson, Haddon. "Listening To The Listeners: He who hath ears to hear gives better sermons." Leadership (Spring 1983): 68-71. Accessed December 2016.
<https://www.christianitytoday.com/pastors/1983/spring/83l2068.html>.

Harper, Douglas. "Pastor (n): Online Etymology Dictionary." 2001-2016. Accessed September 5, 2016. <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=pastor>.

Hebrew Dictionary (Lexicon-Concordance). "Strong's (Hebrew & Chaldee Dictionary of the Old Testament)." Accessed August 4, 2015.
<http://lexiconconcordance.com/hebrew/3027.html>.

Help Word-studies. "2784. Kérussó." 2011. Accessed January 25, 2015,
<http://biblehub.com/greek/2784.htm>.

Jeremias, Joachim. *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*. Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 2004.

Johnson, Darrell W. *The Glory of Preaching*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009.

Keller, Phillip. *A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1970.

Krol, Peter. "Three Kinds of Shame." The Gospel Coalition Blog. April 13, 2014. Accessed January 18, 2015. <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/three-kinds-of-shame>.

Lamsa, George. *The Shepherd of All: The Twenty-Third Psalm*. Philadelphia, PA: Holman, 1930.

Laniak, Timothy S. *Shepherds after My own Heart*. Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2006.

Linn, Edmund Holt. *Preaching as Counseling*. Valley Forge, PA: The Judson Press, 1966.

Long, Thomas G. *The Witness of Preaching*. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989.

———. *The Senses of Preaching*. Atlanta, Georgia: John Knox Press, 1988.

Loscalzo, Craig. *Preaching Sermons that Connect*. Downer Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1992.

Loscalzo, Craig. *Best Advice For Preaching*. Edited by John S. McQuire. Augsburg Fortress, 1998.

McClure, John S. *Preaching Words: 144 Key Terms in Homiletics*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007.

Martin, D. Michael. *I, 2 Thessalonians*, The New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1995).

Matthews, Alice P. *Preaching That Speaks to Women*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003.

Mohler, Jr, R. Albert. *A Theology of Preaching: A Handbook of Contemporary Preaching*. Edited by Michael Duduit. Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1992.

Moulton, James H. and George Milligan, eds. *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1930.

Neiman, James R. *Knowing the Context*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2008.

Oates, Wayne E. "Preaching and Pastoral Care" in *Handbook of Contemporary Preaching*. Edited by Michael Duduit. Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1972.

Oates, Wayne E. "Preaching and Pastoral Care." Preaching Magazine. November 1, 1985. Accessed January 10, 2015.
www.preaching.com/resources/articles/11566843/.

Oswalt, John. *The Bible Among the Myths*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009.

Pantic, Nebojsa. "St. Ambrose and the Spiritual Aspect of Pastoral Administratorship," Orthodox Christianity, no. 31. February 22, 2007. Accessed January 11, 2015.
<http://www.orthodoxchristianity.net/articles/31>.

Peterson, Eugene H. *Working the Angels: The Shape of Pastoral Integrity*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987.

Ramsey, Jr., G. Lee. *Care-full Preaching: From Sermon to Caring Community*. St. Louis MO: Chalice Press, 2000.

Redding, David. *The Lives He Touched: The Relationship of Jesus*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978.

Robinson, Haddon. "Listening To The Listeners: He who hath ears to hear gives better sermons." Leadership. Spring 1983. Accessed December 10, 2016,
<https://www.christianitytoday.com/pastors/1983/spring/83l2068.html>.

Schnackenburg, Rudolf. *The Gospel According to John, Vol. 2*. New York: Cambridge, 1990.

Slick, Matt. "Dictionary of Theology: Pastor." Christian Apologetics & Research Ministry. 2013. Accessed January 20, 2016. <http://carm.org/dictionary-pastor>.

Spell, David. *Peter and Paul in Acts: A Comparison of Their Ministries: A Study in New Testament Apostolic Ministry*. Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, Aug 1, 2006.

Stott, John R. W. *Between Two Worlds: The Art of Preaching in the Twentieth Century*. Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1982.

Vargas, Niceta M. *Word and Witness: An Introduction to the Gospel of John*. Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2013.

Wagner, E. Glenn. *Escape From Church, Inc.: The Return of the Pastor-Shepherd*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999.

Willimon, William H. *Proclamation and Theology*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2005.

Wogaman, J. Philip. *Speaking Truth in Love: Prophetic Preaching to a Broken World*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, September 1, 1998.

VITA

Name : Khay M. See
Date of Birth : November 21, 1970
Place of Birth : Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Education : Bachelor of Law, University of London, 1993
Master of Divinity, Regent College, Vancouver, 2000

Years of D.Min work : 2012 – to present
Expected Graduation : May, 2017